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## Theoretical Aspects of Radicalization Under the Light of Religious Extremism – Introduction

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### Abstract.

Radicalization and its relevance to countering violent extremism (CVE) is examined. The historical origins of radicalization and its contextual nature is explored. The definition of radicalization is discussed, including debates on its connection to violence and its broader adoption in political and academic discourse. The article distinguishes cognitive and behavioral radicalization and examines when radicalization becomes a societal threat. The push, pull, and personal factors framework is introduced as a means of understanding the contributing factors to radicalization. Various models and theories of radicalization are discussed, emphasizing their role in comprehending the complex causes behind violent manifestations of radical ideologies. Overall, the article provides insights into the theory of radicalization and its importance for developing effective CVE strategies.

**Keywords:** counter-terrorism (CT); countering of violent extremism (CVE); prevention of violent extremism (PVE); radicalization; radicalization models; radicalization theories; terrorism; violent extremism.

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### Introduction

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) has become an increasingly relevant concept in the European security discourse in the past two decades. In June 2016, the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy was presented as a fully revised overarching foreign and security policy reference document for the EU. The document explicitly outlines terrorism as one of the most pressing threats the EU is facing currently, and underlines the urgent need to further develop cooperation with the EU's neighborhood and key regions across the globe on countering terrorism (CT) and violent extremism (VE) (EU, 2016, p.21-22). The call for enhanced international cooperation on CT and CVE measures is also highlighted in the

European Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Counter Terrorism of 9 February 2015 (CT MORSE, 2020, p.1).

The purpose of this paper is to holistically define the most recent insights in the theory of radicalization which is used as a primary theoretical and analytical tool for academic research of radicalization and violent extremism. Methodologically, the article presents an exploratory qualitative study, which uses the deductive approach, cross-reference and literature review elements to assess the current state of the art insights in the discipline. Historical and conceptual background of radicalization, along with modern definitions of the concept will be discussed to better frame the topic. Delving deeper, the theories and models of radicalization will be examined closely because the interpretation of real-life radicalization cases, in the vast majority of settings, are informed by a pre-existing theory or model of some sort, which seeks to explain the 'how' and 'why' behind the phenomenon. Consequently, it is arguably impossible to discuss radicalization or its countering efforts without reviewing the primary perspectives through which the phenomenon of radicalization is interpreted in the first place.

## **Main Part**

### **Historical and conceptual background.**

In order to provide quality insight into countering violent extremism and radicalization, it is essential to explore these concepts in sufficient depth. Getting at the bottom of what constitutes radical ideology and behavior can serve as a direct path to successful prevention and countering of polarization, diffusion and violence that many communities across the globe have suffered over the years.

It is not uncommon to start deconstructing a concept from its etymological foundations and such a strategy would serve well in case of radicalization too. The base of the word – radical, has entered public and political discourse in early 18th century, and became more widespread in the 19th century, with the French and American revolutions that embodied diametrical opposition to existing status-quo, narratives and power

structures (Bötticher, 2017, p.74). The element of opposition has remained central to the concept even to the most recent interpretations of the word. Opposition is a highly relational phenomenon which means that notions of radical and radicalization are also highly relative and unique to their contexts, and that relativity is largely rooted in what is considered mainstream and acceptable in a given context. For instance, at certain points in history, universal voting rights have presented a primary example of a radical idea entering a public and political discourse. In other words, the word radical has historically been attributed to people, ideas or behaviors that starkly challenged or came in tension with existing status-quo rooted in the particular context (Neumann, 2008, p.3). Accordingly, radicalization was best interpreted as the process of adopting such radical, that is, extreme in relation to the mainstream, ideas or behaviors.

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, radicalization is no longer reserved for use exclusively in political, public or academic contexts but rather all at the same time. The term has been applied across a variety of contexts and timelines, loading up with meaning and significance. However, what put the notion in a major spotlight was the disturbing increase in the cases of home-grown terrorism in Europe, such as the 2004 Madrid and the 2005 London terrorist attacks, as well as post-9/11 foreign policy pursued by the U.S. in the Middle East (Sedgwick, 2010, p. 484).

While in retrospect, both of these developments contributed to the popularization of the concept, there is no academic consensus regarding which particular event gave birth to radicalization both as an applicable conceptual phenomenon and a discipline in its most current form. For instance, Schmid (2013, pp. 6-8) put strong emphasis on non-authorized US intervention as a primary driver of angered Muslims who shifted to the extremes of their own religion and ideologies to counter the Western aggression. This narrative put a great deal of focus on the Middle East, and Muslim radicals accordingly. On the other hand, Neumann and Kleinmann (2013, p. 366), as well as Sedgwick (2010, p. 479) emphasize the American-led war on terror after unpre-

cedented attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. as the catalysts for the increased interest, funding, and research radicalization has enjoyed for the past two decades. It remains true that the emergence of radicalization as an academic discipline, as well as a framework for interpreting a variety of acts of terror parallels the emergence of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and the spread of terrorist attacks internationally.

That being said, a somewhat recent marriage between radicalization and terrorism has proved to be problematic for several reasons. For one, the lines have been blurred between radical and violent, with popular media and politicians often using the terms interchangeably. In turn, this has introduced the aspect of consequentiality between radicalization and violence, suggesting that radical ideas are to be followed by violence, and violence is preceded by radical ideology of sorts. Indeed, radicalization and radical ideologies have belonged in the terrorist research even before 9/11 as potential causes of such attacks (Sedgwick, 2010, p. 480), however, the adoption of these terms by the popular media have taken away the delicate, curious and well-calculated attitude the academicians employed when discussing radicalization and terrorism before. Nonetheless, academic and institutional definitions kept emerging with an intention of providing much-needed clarity and precision. The following sub-chapter attempts to sort the definitions thematically and comment on their key differences.

### **Radicalization: modern definitions**

Vast as the history of radicalization may be, it is important to capture the most recent definitions of the concept in order to provide adequate commentary on the countering efforts and the future of theory and practice related to radicalization at large. The following sub-chapter concerns with outlining most relevant perspectives on radicalization, and establishing the essence of the concept in its most recent iteration.

Presently, it is not at all uncommon to encounter the definitions of radicalization which propose that radicalization is embracement of violent ideology in

support of a political or religious cause. Bearing in mind the violence, Neumann (2008, p. 4) defined radicalization in a more compact and catchy manner, referring to it as “what goes on before the bomb goes off”. Doosje (2016, p. 81) also suggests that violence is not an optional, but rather an inherent element of radicalization, providing a sole definition of the concept as “a process through which people become increasingly motivated to use violent means against members of an out-group or symbolic targets to achieve behavioral change and political goals” (Doosje et al., 2016, p. 79).

In contrast, a more historically-widespread definition would suggest radicalization is adoption of far reaching means of change or reaction, without specific focus on violence as a central element in the process (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008, pp. 420-422). In order to reconcile the two sides of the coin, Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010, p. 798) proposes violent-radicalization to be treated as an equally valid but a separate phenomenon which she defines as “a process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts” (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 801). In order to address a growing confusion, Schmid (2013, p. 19) proposes that a distinction should be made between “radicalization to violence” and “radicalization by violence”. Schmid also argues that radicalization has been politicized far beyond its socio-psychological academic applications which essentially makes the concept different things to different people, based not only on their perceptions but also on their personal needs and political agendas accordingly. Such commentary on radicalization allows to infer that the concept does not translate across different contexts with much clarity. In fact, quite the opposite may be true, in that public discourse, political discourse, popular media, and academia could all be creating more confusion with each attempt to pinpoint the essence of radicalization, as well as its relation to terrorism and violence at large.

Loose as the concept may be, there have been certain key questions that attempted to help distinguish between types of radicalization at hand. For instance, whether radicalization is a cognitive or behavioral

category has been one prominent differentiating question. Souleimanov (2014, pp. 5-7) proposes that behavioral and cognitive radicalization are qualitatively different phenomena which are intimately linked and possibly even appearing at the same time. Cognitive radicalization refers to a change in the value and belief system of an individual, while behavioral radicalization implies a violent action, often signifying the ultimate point in the process of radicalizing (Souleimanov, 2014, p. 6). Souleimanov's (2014) insights are mirrored by Della Porta and LaFree (2012, p. 8) who argue that actions and attitudes in the process of radicalization do not need to correspond necessarily (. However, this perspective is challenged by Dzhekova (2016) who states that separating attitudes from actions prevents from approaching the issue of Radicalization in a holistic manner (Dzhekova et al., 2016, p. 12). Hence, with more nuance the lines blur between these seemingly clear distinctions too.

Namely, cognitive radicalization can be one way into an act of violence or terrorism, however, in a similar fashion such acts of terror can be carried out through action pathways, that is, a chain of events in which an individual spirals to committing violence, without adoption of values or ideology per se (Borum, 2011, p. 9). Action pathways or action script are proposed by Borum (2011, pp. 7-10) in order to showcase that violence can be perpetrated with minimal knowledge or embracement of a radical doctrine, which has implications in profiling of potential violent extremists, some of whom may not be ideologues at all. Consequently, the difference between the process of radicalization and action pathways is a significant point in the discussion as it also affects the prevention and countering efforts that this text focuses on. Therefore, if radicalization is a cognitive phenomenon, it may or may not have physical consequences, and if it is a behavioral category, it may or may not be preceded by cognitive radicalization. As such, no individual act of violence allows for immediate classification, without close examination of all that influenced and inspired that behavior in the first place.

Furthermore, if radicalization is a process, when exactly it comes to completion is largely an open-ended

question that inevitably begs to revisit the distinctions between behavioral and cognitive categories. Going back to Neumann's (2008, p. 4) framing of the issue, there is no doubt that it is too late when the bomb goes off, that is, when the process fully comes to fruition. Consequently, the question to be reckoned with is when does radicalization require intervention throughout its course and when does it become a real threat to society. These challenging questions seem to have resonated on an institutional level; The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2017) declares that "radicalization in itself is not necessarily a threat to society if it is not connected to violence or other unlawful acts, such as incitement to hatred" (OSCE, 2017, p. 82). However, OSCE also clarifies that "radicalization becomes a threat to society if an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action", and that such acceptance "may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or engage in terrorism" (OSCE, 2017, p. 83). These statements clearly mirror the academic reflections of Souleimanov and Nielsen, among many others, for whom behavioral and cognitive radicalization are closely linked but by no means synonymous. From an institutional perspective, clear labeling and classification is of paramount importance and in this case lays a solid foundation for providing a holistic prevention and countering measures. This thesis will dive deeper into how these definitions inform CVE and PVE measures in subsequent chapters, with a primary focus on the EU institutions such as OSCE and the European Commission.

### **Models and theories of radicalization**

Theories and models of radicalization seek to explain both why and how behind the process of radicalization. They serve as a framework for understanding a complex set of causes and motivators that drive an individual towards violent manifestations of a radical ideology. While no single model or theory may be perfect in capturing or explaining all real-world examples of radicalization, they are the best tools available for academicians and practitioners to make sense of the

process by accounting for micro and macro factors. As a result, it is worthwhile to discuss these models in the scope of this research.

### **Radicalization models:**

#### *a. Push, pull and personal factors*

Push, pull, and personal factors (the three Ps) is a general framework employed for understanding a whole array of factors that play into the radicalization process. From the point of models and theories, it is one of the oldest and most widely used ways of thinking about the radicalization process. The initial iteration divided possible factors into push and pull categories which take into account the starting point of an individual, in other words, circumstances and conditions that may inspire an individual's journey down the path of radicalization, and another set of factors that might incentivize, motivate and attract, in other words, pull an individual to continue the journey and escalate towards behavioral radicalization. Later on, the personal factors that usually went under push and pull categories, were separated for greater clarity and operationalizability (Vergani et al., 2020, p. 854). It should be mentioned that according to this framework, these factors are not simply present on their own but are at a continuous interplay between each other, creating an infinite number of individual combinations. According to Ranstorp (2016), the push-factors involve the following: grievances of social, economic and political nature; a sense of injustice and discrimination; tragedies and crises experienced on a personal level; alienation, marginalization and social exclusion; pre-existing or newly acquired fascination with violence; the process of trying to find the meaning of life or one's own identity; losing faith in democratic processes; and social and political polarization in a community (Ranstorp, 2016, pp. 3-4). The pull-factors are traits that make extremist ideologies attractive to people. These factors can include the unserved desire to belong to a cause, ideology or social network; "power and control; a sense of loyalty and commitment; a sense of excitement and adventure; a romanticized view of ideology and cause; the possibility of heroism, especially among peers, and personal redemption" (Ranstorp, 2016,

p. 4; Kruglanski, 2014, p. 28). Lastly, personal factors speak most directly to an individual's unique psyche and personal characteristics and signify aspects that make certain individuals more likely to radicalize than circumstantially comparable peers (Vergani et al., 2020, p. 854). These factors may include psychological disorders, traumatic experiences, and unique personal characteristics (Vergani et al. 2020, p. 854).

Generally speaking, four research dimensions in the field of radicalization have concerned grievances, networks, ideologies and enabling supporting structures (Hafez & Mullins, 2015, pp. 962-969). The push, pull and personal factors framework attempts to reconcile all these dimensions and maximize the comprehensiveness when it comes to capturing the factors at play in the process of individual's shift towards violent extremism. As such it does not prioritize one set of factors, such as economic or social deprivation, over another set of factors like personal tragedy or identity crisis. Consequently, it is arguably the widest and most all-encompassing perspective that also leaves much room for interpretation. As will be discussed later on, other models essentially borrow parts of the three Ps model and construct more specific, yet linear narratives on the process of radicalization. To counter Maskaliunaitė (2015, p. 23) argument that "engaging in terrorist activities as a result of radicalization is more a process based on rational choice than an outcome of processes beyond individual's control", the push, pull and personal factors framework suggests that radicalization is a much more complicated process and it is not exactly a matter of 'more one than the other' but rather a matter of 'one and the other too'. Hence, according to the three Ps perspective, the truth lies somewhere in the middle, that is, both in an individual's personal decision-making, as well as the processes beyond their control.

#### *b. PET Model*

The Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET) model was introduced by Danish Intelligence Services to propose that radicalization is essentially a top-down process where an individual is heavily influenced by an external subject, in this case a radicalizer, who leads the individual through a process of personal change that is

ultimately reflected in their behavior, social life, and moral compass (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009, p. 32). The PET model has four stages: in stage one, a radicalizer establishes personal contact with a vulnerable person who is possibly open to radical ideas; in stage two, the relationship starts having a profound effect on the soon-to-be radicalized, to an extent when his or her behavior begins to change; in stage three, the soon-to-be radicalized narrows his or her social life to a group that shares identical views, and in the process, he or she also cuts off ties with family and friends; in stage four, the almost radicalized individual strengthens his or her morals through becoming acquainted with violent scenes and scenarios that are soon to follow his/her radicalization. The PET model is an example of more linear radicalization models, which clearly identifies subjects, establishes the relationship, and predicts outcomes accordingly. While most models take personal relationships into account, the PET framework almost exclusively views radicalization as a journey on which a vulnerable is taken by his or her radicalizer (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009, pp. 36-42).

*c. Witkorowicz model*

Witkorowicz's model of radicalization originates from his earlier study of Muslim activists, and employs Social Movement Theory (SMT) in order to outline four stages in the process of radicalization. SMT has been a valuable tool for sociologists to research social movements by inquiring into mobilization dynamics, use of opportunities, and framing of actions and narratives (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017, p. 214). The stage 1 of Witkorowicz's model observes an individual becoming accepting of new values or a worldview; the first stage is followed by the stage in which an individual begins what the author describes as religious seeking. In stage 3, the soon-to-be radicalized experiences 'frame alignment' which means that an individual becomes convinced by the way the radical group presents the social reality. Such presentation is fully embraced and is ultimately followed by stage 4, in which the individual socializes into a radical group, adopting the values and constructing a new identity (Rahimullah et al, 2013, p. 24). This model puts particular emphasis on the

ideological elements that help vulnerable individuals make sense of the reality. As a result, it invites the question of whether radicalization can, in some cases, be viewed as a response to an ontological problem. For what it is worth, Witkorowicz's model finds inspiration in sociological doctrines and emphasizes psycho-social influencers accordingly, providing yet another angle for interpreting a highly complex and dynamic process that radicalization is.

*d. Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism"*

Moghaddam's model includes 6 steps that start out by a perceived sense of injustice and culminate with an ultimate act of violence – a terrorist attack (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 163). In the first step, an individual perceives injustice that he or she cannot reconcile with any of the socially acceptable measures. The frustration then turns into anger and resentment towards political decision-makers who, in the eyes of a soon-to-be radicalized, are primary subjects responsible for the injustice. It is noteworthy that in the anger phase, the expression of aggression becomes a viable option and even though an individual does not commit violence yet, his or her readiness to do so comes to fruition. The next step concerns acceptance of the struggle and the justification of any means in order to achieve envisioned societal order. In the fourth step, the individual joins a radical group such as a terrorist organization. Cognitively radicalized members of the organization then create targets from civilians by dehumanizing them as the enemy that breeds unjust social and political system. In this stage a radicalized individual psychologically prepares for committing the act of terrorism which presents the top of the staircase (Moghaddam, 2005, pp. 162-166). Moghaddam clearly builds on the grievance's paradigm, specifically emphasizing injustice, relative deprivation, and political resentment. The proposed model draws a picture of radicalization as a response, rather than an agenda. In other words, according to Moghaddam, radicalization is a reactive phenomenon, as opposed to proactive political quest or a mission.

*e. NYPD model*

Unlike the top-down models such as above-discussed PET, the NYPD model views radicalization as bottom-

up process (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 16). Similar to PET and Witkorowicz's framework, this model also has four stages. The first stage is a pre-radicalization phase that observes individual's background and lifestyle, including education, marital status, place of residence and religious convictions. The second stage includes the exploration of Salafi Islam, which takes place parallel to weakening of ties with pre-radicalization identity. In the third stage, the individual fully embraces Salafi Jihadism and is convinced that action has to be taken in order to further the Jihadi cause. In the final stage, the individual accepts his or her personal responsibility in the struggle and declares himself/herself as a warrior in that struggle (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, pp. 16-17). The NYPD model is not very clear about why individuals start exploring Salafi Islam seriously, unlike models that discuss specific grievances that may be at play in the process. Nonetheless, it hints at psychological and social roots that individuals may be struggling with in the pre-radicalization process.

*f. Thomas Precht's radicalization stages*

Thomas Precht, in a report funded and issued by the Danish government, theorizes the stages of radicalization that depict the process in a following manner:

Pre-radicalization: the first stage refers to an individual's environment that contains triggers such as "societal or social alienation, perceived injustices, personal traumas, and living conditions" (Gilperez Lopez et al., 2017, p. 12).

Conversion and identification: this phase reflects changes in individual's political and religious beliefs, and acceptance of violence as possible means of pursuing political goals. In instances of Islamic radicalization, individuals may become stricter followers of Islam and demonstrate growing resentment towards Western narratives and values.

Conviction and indoctrination: individuals embrace the idea that violence has no alternative to defending their religious beliefs and the group identity.

Action: manifestation of radicalization in most tangible and physical ways, in other words, behavioral radicalization, where individuals act upon their convictions and commit acts of violence (Gilperez-Lopez et al., 2017, p. 12).

Thomas Precht's radicalization stages model is another example of a more linear approach towards the process of radicalization. It is unique in its focus on political change and violence as sole means to achieving that change. In a way, it echoes the original understanding of radicalization<sup>1</sup>, that is, resorting to extreme means in order to bring about social or political change. Nevertheless, more nuanced personal factors and motivators are overlooked, albeit with intention. In the large scheme of radicalization models and theories, Precht's stages may not be untrue, however, they are relatively incomplete compared to other models.

**Radicalization theories**

It is important to include radicalization theories along with models because, unlike specific models that comment on the process of radicalization, radicalization theories seek to explain the phenomenon in a broader and more universally applicable terms, possibly fitting more than one model. Three prominent theories that have added great insight to the field are the uncertainty reduction theory, moral disengagement theory, and the theory of self-fulfilling prophecy.

The uncertainty reduction theory suggests that individuals experiencing uncertainty will gravitate towards groups and entities that can reduce their uncertainties. This clearly echoes back to the Witkorowicz's model that raised the question about radicalization as a response to an ontological problem. The uncertainty reduction theory has become prominent in the context of Western Muslims, for whom their deeply personal religious identity conflicts with their social identity maintained by adoption of Western values. These tensions become a source of uncertainty, which is effectively resolved by a group who offers clear-cut

<sup>1</sup> Original in relation to how the term has been defined since the formation of radicalization as a field, as observed by Neumann (2008).

answers and is impervious to criticism or social pressure (Rahimullah et al, 2013, p. 26).

Bandura's moral disengagement theory, on the other hand, is concerned with an individual's sense of morality, which according to the theory reverses an individual into accepting acts of terror as an obligation rather than forbidden crime (Aly, Taylor & Karnovsky, 2013, pp. 369-371). This theory mirrors the NYPD model's last stage into radicalization, in which an individual accepts the responsibility to serve as a warrior in the struggle. In other words, moral disengagement theory can complement the NYPD model of radicalization and add insight to it by introducing the concept of altered moral compass, which helps explain the 'why' behind an individual's gravitation towards violent ideologies.

Lastly, self-fulfilling prophecy is a socio-psychological phenomenon in which an originally false expectation results in its own confirmation. Namely, an expectation regarding an individual or a group consciously or unconsciously leads the person or entity to act in ways that confirm the existing expectations (Wilkins, 1976, p. 178). Utilizing Sumner's concept of "in-groups" and "out-groups" further intensifies the negative implications of self-fulfilling prophecy (Passini, 2009, p. 47). In the context of radicalization, out-groups (frustrated and relatively-deprived ethnic or religious minorities etc.) are portrayed as inherently evil forces which undermine the in-group's security and social well-being. This narrative implies a moral superiority based on victimhood that unifies the sense of in-group and maintains its identity through shared insecurities (Zirakzadeh, 2010, p. 934). In certain scenarios, the overdependence on the in-group can lead to an exercise of perverse logic, that is, "damned if you do and damned if you don't syndrome" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 181). In this variation of self-fulfilling prophecy, the in-group's (society, political elites etc.) belief system is not dependent on the out-group's behavior so any prophecy comes true regardless of what out-group members do because the prophecies are rooted in the false definition of the situation. Even though the theory is one of the oldest theories borrowed from the field of sociology, a

growing number of radicalization and terrorism cases have been interpreted through the self-fulfilling prophecy lens, especially concerning home-grown and lone-wolf terrorism in the U.S. and the EU in the past two decades. Furthermore, self-fulfilling prophecy is one of the rare theories that implies the role of the community and its practices as a primary driver of radicalization processes. According to this theory, the process of radicalization is a consequence, or a symptom, of a larger societal dynamic that enabled a group or an individual to adopt an extremist cause. In comparison to discussed models of radicalization, self-fulfilling prophecy proposes a more macro-level perspective that accounts for a longer timeline, as well as a more holistic view of social and political dynamics contributing to the radicalization process.

### Conclusion

The phenomenon of radicalization and its connection to violent extremism has gained considerable attention in the European security discourse. The urgency to address this issue is apparent in the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy and the European Council Conclusions, which emphasize the need for international cooperation in countering terrorism and violent extremism. In order to effectively prevent and counter radicalization, it is essential to comprehensively understand and contextualize all constituting parts of the concept.

The term "radical" has evolved over time, representing ideas, behaviors, or individuals that challenge the existing status quo. Its relation to the mainstream emphasizes the importance of understanding radicalization within specific societal, political, and cultural frameworks and not as a general matrix which could apply across various contexts. The increased interest in radicalization can be attributed to significant events such as home-grown terrorism in Europe and post-9/11 foreign policies, but there is no academic consensus on a single catalyst for its emergence as a discipline.

Defining radicalization is a complex undertaking due to its evolving nature and its somewhat problematic association with violence. Different perspectives



highlight the varying interpretations of the concept. Some definitions focus on the embracement of violent ideologies, while others emphasize far-reaching means of change or reaction without specific reference to violence. The distinction between radicalization to violence and radicalization by violence further complicates the understanding of the concept. Additionally, debates arise regarding the categorization of radicalization as a cognitive or behavioral phenomenon, with arguments for their interconnection or separateness. These complexities underscore the challenges in formulating clear definitions that can be applied universally.

A wide variety of models and theories have been developed in the past two decades to explain the process of radicalization and shed light on the underlying causes and motivators. The push, pull, and personal factors model is one of the most widely used frameworks, considering a range of factors that contribute to the radicalization process. Push factors involve grievances,

injustices, marginalization, and a fascination with violence, while pull factors relate to the appeal of extremist ideologies, a sense of belonging, power, and personal redemption. However, it is important to recognize that these factors interact and vary in individual cases, making each radicalization process unique.

In conclusion, preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism requires a holistic approach that considers historical, conceptual, and theoretical perspectives. Understanding the context-specific nature of radicalization, the evolving definitions, and the complexity of the radicalization process is crucial for developing effective countermeasures. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of push, pull, and personal factors, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can work towards comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of radical thought and actions, and promote resilience in communities.

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## რადიკალიზმის თეორიული ასპექტები რელიგიური ექსტრემიზმის კრილში – შესავალი

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