



Understanding Radicalism

Defining key terms and concepts

Author: Ruza Karlovic

1. Module description

The goal of this module is to familiarise course participants with radicalisation as a harmful social phenomenon in a certain context through the topics listed below. It aims to clarify the concept of radicalization in the social sciences, discuss the phenomenology and some sociological and psychological aspects of radicalization through some examples, and emphasize awareness and prevention of this phenomenon as the duty of the whole society.

- Understanding Radicalism: defining key terms and concepts.
- Ideological Motivations: exploring the ideological foundations of radical movements, including political, religious, and social ideologies.
- Radicalisation Processes: why individuals become radicalised, including social, psychological, and environmental factors.
- Online Radicalization: analysing the role of the internet and social media in radicalisation and recruitment.
- Counter-Radicalisation Strategies: strategies for preventing and countering radicalisation, including community engagement, education, and de-radicalisation programs.
- Radicalisation in Different Contexts: understanding how radicalisation manifests differently in various contexts, such as religious extremism, far-right extremism, and ethno-nationalist extremism.

2. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:

1. Understand the concept of radicalization, extremism and violence
2. Have the ability to place radicalization in the context of the prevention of terrorism
3. Have the confidence and competence to critically understand and examine debates about radicalization and the profiles of persons open to radicalization
4. Compare the challenges involved in implementing radicalization prevention strategies and



Съфинансирано от
Европейския съюз

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1. Social development model of radicalization	10
1.2. Understanding radicalism: defining key terms and concepts	16
1.3. Types of radicalization	21
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	30
3. THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION	34
4. PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION	38
4.1. Using communication to observe and prevent deviations	39
5. CONCLUSION	44
REFERENCES	51



1. INTRODUCTION

Radicalization is a social phenomenon that requires a broader discussion regarding the social factors contributing to it. Famous sociologist Khosrokhavar (2017) emphasizes the importance of examining these factors in understanding radicalization. While not all forms of radicalization are inherently negative, those associated with illegal actions that endanger **societal safety and security** are a serious concern. It is crucial to raise **awareness about this negative aspect of radicalization**.

Considering common sense, it is evident that each individual is born and develops within **specific social frameworks**, including **culture, values, and norms**. These frameworks play a crucial role in shaping one's identity. Belonging to a particular social group or nation, as well as adhering to certain values, significantly influences how an individual perceives their identity within society. If a person does not embrace „healthy“ norms and values, their behavior may lean towards radicalization.

Theories proposed over two decades ago regarding the Internet, cyberspace, networked society, and globalization suggest that individuals can **utilize modern technologies** to exhibit various behaviors and make lasting impressions. For those with a **predisposition to destructive behaviors**, such as radicalization that can lead to violence and terrorism, cyberspace serves as an effective platform for recruitment. Additionally, sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar points out that radical groups do not rely solely on the internet and cyberspace. Such groups can also form **in prisons or on the streets**, especially if there is a **charismatic leader** capable of **recruiting psychologically vulnerable individuals** (Khosrokhavar, 2013).

In addition to Khosrokhavar's work, several other sociologists have explored how modern social structures contribute to the emergence and spread of radical ideologies. For instance, Manuel Castells argues that the fragmentation and rapid transformation characteristic of network societies can lead to social isolation and the formation of alternative, radical identities (Castells, 1996). According to Castells, the **breakdown of traditional social bonds** in an increasingly digitalized world creates spaces where radical ideas can flourish.



Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" highlights how the erosion of stable social bonds and the pervasive uncertainty of contemporary life contribute to individuals' vulnerability to radical ideologies (Bauman, 2000). Bauman contends that when traditional sources of identity and security weaken, people may be drawn toward radical movements that promise clear-cut solutions and a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, Marc Sageman's research on the role of social networks in the radicalization process underscores that extremist ideologies are often spread through **close-knit communities and personal connections** (Sageman, 2004). Sageman demonstrates that radicalization is less about individual pathology and more about the interplay of social, economic, and political factors that drive marginalized individuals toward extremist groups.

Together, these sociological perspectives suggest that radicalization is deeply embedded in the fabric of society. The combination of **social isolation**, the breakdown of traditional community structures, economic disparities, and political uncertainties creates an environment in which radical ideologies can take root and spread. Recognizing this complexity is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to counter radicalization and protect societal well-being.

It is noteworthy that scientists in the social sciences assert that radicalization leading to mass violence was not possible before the advent of the Internet and new technologies. Radicalization is characterized by a radical ideological vision and an unyielding desire to implement it. In other words, it involves extremist ideology and activities. It is important to emphasize that radicalization is not limited to extremist groups that claim to follow Islam; across the globe, various groups can be radicalized by secular ideologies and other religions (Khosrokhavar, 2017). Understanding the factors contributing to radicalization is crucial for comprehending the phenomenon itself. There are **individuals known as "lone wolves"** who isolate themselves and commit acts of violence resulting in mass harm and fear. Additionally, there are small groups led by influential leaders who play a significant role in identifying and recruiting individuals susceptible to radicalization and indoctrination.



Social factors are often seen as a constant element in the context of radicalization and terrorism. **Various social issues**, such as the consequences of economic, migration, and security crises, **are frequently associated with the social causes of harmful radicalization**. Some argue that radicalization becomes a means for individuals to elevate their existence in the struggle between justice and injustice (Marone, 2016). In the professional literature, it is stated that in Europe, the advancement of fundamentalist ideology appears to be fueled by the limited success of social policies. The shortcomings in the integration process have not effectively transformed the promise of greater inclusion into reality; instead, they have fostered a legacy of resentment and mistrust, making terrorist recruiters increasingly successful in attracting even minors. **Extremism can also spread within families and social circles**, where young people seek to express their individuality and shape their own futures. Minors are particularly vulnerable to the influence of subversive individuals or groups, who may exploit their charisma to promote the superiority of their beliefs (Rossi, 2020). The formation of a "society within a society" (often referred to as a no-go zone) undermines the dominant values, culture, and customs of the broader community. **This issue needs to be examined from a social science perspective, and solutions must be sought to mitigate its impact.**

A very interesting and instructive book on radicalization by sociologist Khosrokhavar summarizes how radicalization is a dynamic process that evolves and adapts to new contexts, thereby undermining state efforts to combat it. Currently, jihadism is the most significant form of new radicalization in both the West and the Muslim world. However, this phenomenon is also spreading to other ideologies, including xenophobic and anti-Islamic extremism from the far right, as well as violent actions carried out by various groups. These actions are influenced by the specific circumstances and the changing strategies of intelligence services assigned to counter these threats.

Extreme behaviours that go against dominant societal values and lead to significant violence should not be viewed merely as a security issue; they should be recognized as a broader cognitive challenge for society as a whole (Khosrokhavar, 2017).



In light of this it is worth mentioning that the Change Institute conducted research¹ on violent radicalization for the European Commission in 2008. This study aimed to explore the beliefs, narratives, and ideologies that contribute to violent radicalism rooted in an abusive interpretation of Islam, with a focus on understanding both its causes and potential remedies. The research involved empirical data collection through **145 interviews with stakeholders and primary fieldworkers across four EU Member States**—Denmark, France, Germany, and the UK—to capture the diversity within the Muslim community. The findings indicate that **grievances**—whether real or perceived—are instrumental in justifying the use of violence. However, such violence is not irrational; it is underpinned by ideological frameworks that provide a vision for the future and a prescription for action. The study also examined the role of the Internet in the radicalization process. Although **online content linked to violent ideologies** is prevalent, it primarily functions as a distribution mechanism for propaganda (e.g., promoting enemy violence, military ‘successes’, and martyr glorification) rather than as the main driver of radicalization, which appears to be more heavily influenced by face-to-face interactions.

Importantly, the adoption of explicitly violent radical narratives was not a predominant trend among interviewees; very few actively subscribed to or acted upon such views, with many expressing opposition to violence. The key narratives identified encompassed themes such as living in a ‘hostile’ society, disenfranchisement, heightened political consciousness, anti-imperialism, social justice, revivalism, emancipation, and the personal quest to be a good Muslim (e.g., interpreting the headscarf as a symbol of liberation). Furthermore, the study noted that the majority of European Muslims belong to visible ethnic minorities and thus are shaped by experiences of xenophobia, lower socioeconomic status, and Islamophobia.

The ideational framework of violent radicals is characterized by a reliance on selective and literal interpretations of Islamic texts to support political causes and strategic imperatives. Although often labelled ‘Salafi’, this ideology is primarily political and developed outside traditional Islamic

¹ Studies into violent radicalisation; Lot 2 The beliefs ideologies and narratives (2008). Available at: home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/ec_radicalisation_study_on_ideology_and_narrative_en.pdf



jurisprudence. It is also recognized that **individuals or groups may share certain ideological elements without necessarily being radicalized or engaging in violence.**

While the primary responsibility for combating radicalization rests with the **Member States**, there are tools at the **EU level** designed to assist them: **the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)** brings together experts from various European fields, including teachers, police officers, and prison staff, who work with individuals at risk of radicalization. The **EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)** monitors terrorist content online and refers it to relevant platforms. Since its establishment in 2015, it has referred over 130,000 pieces of content to internet companies, a significant increase from 25,000 in 2019. In December 2020, the European Parliament endorsed the **EU Security Union Strategy for 2020-2025** and a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda, which aims to prevent radicalization by providing opportunities for vulnerable young people and supporting the rehabilitation of radicalized prisoners. By the end of 2020, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on rules that require online platforms to remove terrorist content within one hour. This agreement was supported by the Civil Liberties Committee and was approved by the Parliament on April 28, 2021. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/eu-knowledge-hub-prevention-radicalisation_en



1.1. Social development model of radicalization

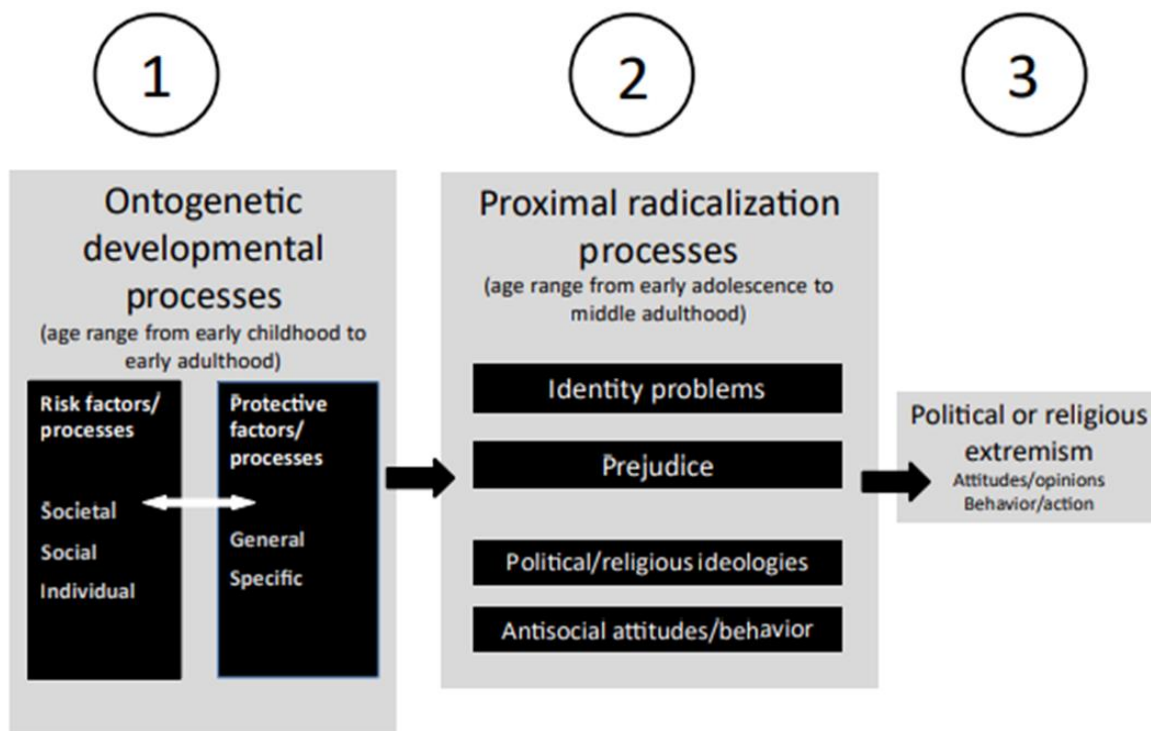
Radicalization and radicalism are relative terms that have been interpreted in various ways throughout history. **In the 19th century, radicalism was associated with the struggle for democratic values, while today it often refers to anti-democratic, extremist, and fundamentalist views** (Schmid, 2013). Current examples of ideologies considered radical include political Islam and extreme right-wing beliefs, which carry a negative connotation in the context of a democratic society. In contrast, the radical ideologies of the 19th century are generally viewed more positively. The fundamental assumption from a developmental perspective is that radicalization and extremism, like any other area of development, result from both societal and individual factors. **Radicalization does not occur spontaneously**; therefore, in professional literature, we often find explanations of this phenomenon that are based on established theories explaining why some individuals engage in criminal behavior while others do not.

One effective approach is to study the etiology of radicalization, which entails a systematic integration of theoretical and empirical knowledge. In essence, some authors have presented this model as follows: while it is not entirely new, it emerges from a comprehensive integration of existing theories and empirical research related to social and antisocial development, crime, and the social and developmental psychology of radicalization and extremism. This model draws upon various sources of information, including theories, empirical findings, and results from prevention efforts.



Figure 1: A social-developmental model of radicalization

Beelmann (2020:6)



Stage 1 outlines developmental processes shaped by the interaction of risk and protective factors influencing radicalization. **Risk factors include societal, social, and individual elements that contribute to extremist attitudes**, while protective factors are those that can mitigate these effects. Various risk factors, such as intergroup conflicts, economic insecurity, and family socialization aspects, heighten the likelihood of radicalization. Additionally, individual issues like low self-esteem and personality traits such as authoritarianism serve as confirmed risks. While much research has focused on risk factors, there is a growing recognition of resilience and protective factors like strong social relationships and democratic values. Though risk and protective factors have a consistent empirical link to radicalization, the relationship is weak, indicating that many

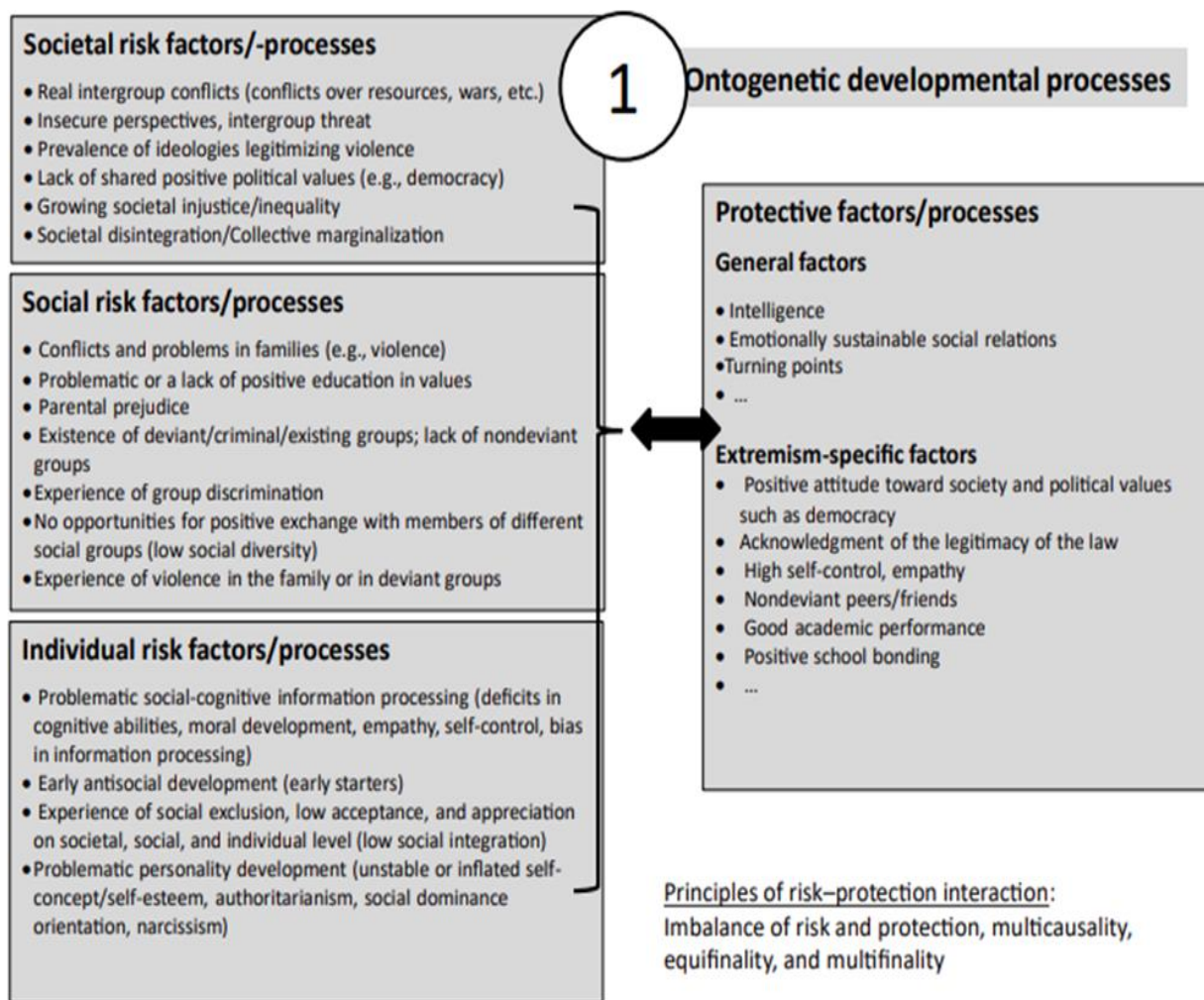


individuals exposed to these factors do not become extremists. Ultimately, radicalization is more likely when long-term risk effects outweigh protective influences, and **Stage 2** of the developmental model includes processes that directly link to radicalization and form essential **preconditions for political or religious extremism**. This phase spans from early adolescence to middle adulthood (ages 14 to 30), during which **over 90% of extremist offenders become radicalized**. While later radicalization is possible, it is rare and generally tied to earlier psychological factors. Four proximal processes of radicalization influence and reinforce each other, impacting extremist attitudes and actions. **Problematic identity processes involve a need for appreciation, manifesting as feelings of injustice, marginalization, or threatened identity**. Key risk factors include low or excessive self-esteem and experiences of rejection and discrimination. Prejudice involves negative perceptions towards members of other social groups, which can be based on real or virtual identities. **It affects social-cognitive conditions related to radicalization and extremism, forming negative intergroup attitudes that relate to extremist behavior through stereotypes and discriminatory treatment.** **Observation of development from early childhood to young adulthood. Judgment of radicalization and extremism should not solely rely on the stated goals of individuals or groups; latent and nonconscious motives can also be pivotal. Correctly interpreting these motives is essential.** There are various theories explaining radicalization processes, including Moghaddam's (2005) "staircase to terrorism," which outlines six steps from radicalization to terrorist acts, starting with societal inequality and ending with engagement in violence. Each step has distinct psychological aspects supported by theories like relative deprivation and rational choice. However, empirical evidence lacks confirmation of transitions between steps. **Stage 3**, the individual engages in violent acts against other groups. Both models, like other stage models (for example, Wiktorowicz 2005), describe radicalization as an ongoing stage process. However, other researchers have criticized not only the linearity of such stage models but also their exclusivity, maintaining that there are several paths to radicalization (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2011).



Figure 2: Overview of risk and protective factors for radicalization

Beelmann (2020:6)



Human development is influenced not only by risk factors but also by resilience and positive youth development. **While protective factors (like emotional support and good school relationships) are recognized, they have been studied less than risk factors.** The connection between these protective factors and radicalization is weak, as many individuals face risks without becoming extremists. Recognized protective factors include general protective factors (e.g. emotional



support) and specific factors for preventing radicalization (e.g. good relationships with school, democratic values, respect for the law) (Lösel & Farrington, 2012).

Some key points:

- **Radicalization as a Social Phenomenon:**
 - It is driven by a range of social factors that must be examined to understand its emergence and impact.
 - Sociologist Khosrokhavar highlights the importance of these social factors in explaining radicalization.
- **Negative Impact of Certain Forms of Radicalization:**
 - While not all radicalization is inherently negative, forms associated with illegal activities that jeopardize societal safety and security are of major concern.
 - Raising awareness about the harmful aspects of radicalization is crucial.
- **Sociological Perspectives:**
 - **Manuel Castells:** Argues that network societies, with their fragmentation and rapid changes, foster social isolation and the development of alternative, radical identities.
 - **Zygmunt Bauman:** Introduces the concept of "liquid modernity," explaining how the erosion of stable social bonds and pervasive uncertainty make individuals vulnerable to radical ideologies.
 - **Marc Sageman:** Emphasizes that radicalization is driven by the interplay of social, economic, and political factors, spread mainly through personal
 - **Role of the Internet and Face-to-Face Interaction:**
 - The Internet primarily serves as a tool for distributing propaganda and reinforcing narratives rather than being the main driver of radicalization.
 - Face-to-face interactions in real-world settings play a more significant role in the radicalization process.
- **Empirical Research Insights:**



- Based on 145 interviews across Denmark, France, Germany, and the UK, the study found that while grievances justify the use of violence, explicit violent radical narratives are not predominant among most interviewees.
- Key narratives include themes of societal hostility, disenfranchisement, political consciousness, anti-imperialism, social justice, revivalism, and personal religious quests.

- **Societal and Structural Influences:**

- Many European Muslims, often members of visible ethnic minorities, experience xenophobia, economic disparities, and Islamophobia, which contribute to feelings of marginalization.
- Systemic issues like economic crises, migration challenges, and security concerns further fuel radicalization.

- **Ideological Framework of Violent Radicals:**

- Violent radicals rely on selective and literal interpretations of Islamic texts, supporting political causes outside of traditional Islamic jurisprudence.
- This framework, often labelled as ‘Salafi’, is primarily political and does not automatically imply that all who share some ideological elements will resort to violence.

- **Broader Implications:**

- Effective strategies to counter radicalization must address the underlying social injustices and foster social inclusion through education, dialogue, and community support.
- Comprehensive approaches are needed to mitigate the risks posed by radical ideologies and promote societal well-being.



1.2. Understanding radicalism: defining key terms and concepts

Lat. radix: root of lat. radicula: $\approx$ radicalis: root, rooted $\approx$ lat. radicandus: to be rooted

Radicalization = extremist ideology + violent act (Bronner, 2009)
= radical ideological vision + will to implement

“Radicalization” is currently the standard term used to describe “what happens” before the bomb explodes.” (Mark Sedgwick, 2010)

Radicalism, in both its historical and contemporary forms, evokes strong reactions and remains a highly debated term. The historical meaning of radicalism had a more positive connotation than the current one because radical people were fighting for societal reforms such as the right to labour or fight against the death penalty, and the civil rights for men and women...). Since 11 September 2001 radicalization has been discussed with negative connotations connected with terrorism. In other words, it means the context from which terrorists and extremists have come out. Related to that the network - **RAN was established by the European Commission as an EU-wide umbrella network of practitioners engaged to prevent and counter radicalization to violent extremism in 2010.** The main task of it is connecting, developing and disseminating expertise and seeking to develop state-of-the-art knowledge for the prevention and suppression of radicalization. European societies put priority and efforts to combat radicalism (nationalist ideologies, online radicalization) in alignment with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and international human rights principles. While radicalism can inspire transformative change, such as movements for civil rights, it can also lead to destructive extremism, as seen in acts of terrorism. Radicalism is multifaceted—it can embody both idealism and violence, depending on the context.



Radicalism comes from the Latin word radix, meaning "root," and reflects a desire for fundamental change. In political and social contexts, radicalism calls for structural shifts rather than superficial reforms. It is often associated with movements seeking **to redefine societal order**. However, radicalism **is not per se violent or extreme**—it is the methods used and the ideological rigidity that may push it into extremism.

Although the problem of radicalization is dangerous and violates social values, based on the professional literature and the experience of those who have been through the hell of radicalization, a solution to the prevention of radicalization can be offered.

Investing in invisible social networks, so-called social capital, builds resistance to radicalization. The measures and techniques that can be taken are:

- **Education:** Promoting critical thinking and media literacy to help individuals recognize and resist manipulative narratives.
- **Dialogue:** Encouraging conversation across ideological divides to foster empathy and mutual understanding.
- **Community building:** Strengthening local networks of support and belonging, reducing the appeal of extremist groups. Local support for some associations that would offer people (young people) constructive content.
- **Public policies:** targeted action by the Government and organizations to deal with the creation of conditions for social inclusion. Social inclusion generally refers to active participation in all aspects of life, including the social and economic world, which can develop desirable status, and importance in society, reduce adjustment difficulties, and enable the acquisition of new opportunities for advancement (Sayce, 2001). Mindell (1995) argues that to eliminate radical roots within families and religious organizations (such as churches, mosques, and local groups), it is important to recognize that the mainstream society has a role in driving marginalized individuals toward extremism. **People do not exhibit fundamentalist or abusive behaviors spontaneously; they often have deep-seated wounds** (Mindell, 1995).



Factors such as discrimination, abuse of power, and ongoing marginalization play a crucial role in pushing marginalized individuals out of society and into radical ideologies that promise better lives. **However, it is essential to clarify that we do not seek to justify or excuse violent actions. We emphasize that these acts of violence occur within a social context.** If we continue to view terrorism solely as a manifestation of personal or inner issues rather than as a result of social injustice, we will struggle to address the problem effectively (Shafieoun, Haq, 2023).

Social science suggests that it is important to keep in mind that **some situational factors may contribute to the easier recruitment of individuals to participate in organized crime and terrorism, whether online or in person.** These factors may include social/external and individual/internal factors of each. External (social, family, economic, peers, life experiences) and internal/personal (emotions, cognitions) and political and historical context in addition to a personal situation, cognitions, and also cognitive social factors, such as risk-taking and sense of purpose, lead to interaction with recruitment attempts and activities of terrorist and organized crime networks to engage and disengage members (Taylor, Horgan, 2006).

PROPHETS² seeks to investigate and understand the behavioural processes caused by individuals engaged in cybercrime actions. Online behavioural radicalisation processes are those that slowly **desensitise, isolate and immoralise** individuals towards either carrying out or supporting extreme acts. Whilst, online cybercrime is increasingly interwoven with aspects of terrorism, it is important to note the **primary concern** of PROPHETS is in **identifying the online factors which lead to the behavioural radicalisation** that precedes many acts of cybercrime or related online terrorism.

² One of the goals of the (EU project, PROPHETS, GA786894) was early identification of security threats within developing a coherent, EU-wide, adaptive security model against cybercrime and digital radicalisation built upon the interplay of the human factors within the new cyber ecosystem. Through increasing EU wide awareness, resilience, information sharing and interoperability between civilians, local, regional and state-wide authorities, the project sought to reduce and tackle the diversity and quantity of cybercrime through measures which pro-actively prevent and enable the better investigation of the behavioural radicalisation process. This included detecting the immoralisation and desensitisation processes that violate important social norms (e.g., the killing of civilians). In the context of behavioural aspect radicalization can be understood as extreme commitment, wherein the most radicalized individuals are extremely committed to their goal, without concern for the needs and safety of other...



"The concept of **Behavioural Radicalisation** may be taken to mean: the process in which an individual's **moral, ethical, logical and emotional societal norms and awareness** are compromised, leading to an increased risk of supporting, or directly engaging in, illegal and anti-societal activities. In this case, we are concerned with the **increased engagement with cybercrime and online aspects of terrorism.**"

Radicalization is connected with the socio-political and cultural characteristics of a society. A Bosnian professor, an expert in the prevention and fight against terrorism and radicalization points out that **radicalization in different parts of the world takes place in different ways and therefore counter-radicalization and de-radicalization measures should be developed concerning the characteristics of the radicalization process.**

Although radicalization is also a risk factor for radicalization similar to other parts of Europe, but somewhat different in the countries of Southeast Europe. Azinović (2017:12) studied foreign fighters who went to fight in Syria from the countries of the Western Balkans and came to the conclusion **that they have in common: having a criminal record, coming from dysfunctional families, being unemployed, having a low level of education and psychological problems.** The characteristics of the countries of the Western Balkans, such as incompetence and irresponsibility of politics, nepotism, corruption, high unemployment rates and dysfunctional administration also facilitate radicalization (Azinović 2017:13). **In the West, radicalization mainly occurs among immigrants** who are not well integrated into Western societies, who suffer discrimination, injustice and inequality, and who are socioeconomically marginalized, **while in the countries of the Western Balkans, radicalization occurs among natives population** (Azinović 2017:12).

Some key points:



- **Historical vs. Contemporary Radicalism:** Historically, radicalism had a more positive connotation, advocating for societal reforms (e.g., labor rights, and abolition of the death penalty). After 9/11, radicalization gained negative associations tied to terrorism.
- **EU Efforts Against Radicalization:** The European Commission established the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) in 2010 to prevent and counter violent extremism by developing and sharing expertise and best practices.
- **Dual Nature of Radicalism:** Radicalism can inspire positive societal change but also lead to destructive extremism, depending on the methods and ideological rigidity.
- **Roots and Meaning:** The term “radicalism” comes from the Latin word *radix* (root), reflecting its call for deep, structural change rather than superficial reforms.
- **Some prevention strategies:**
 - **Education:** Promoting critical thinking and media literacy.
 - **Dialogue:** Encouraging conversations across ideological divides.
 - **Community Building:** Strengthening local support networks.
 - **Public Policies:** Promoting social inclusion to reduce the appeal of extremism.
- **Role of Marginalization:** Systemic discrimination, abuse of power, and marginalization push individuals toward extremist ideologies promising better opportunities and justice.
- **Behavioral Radicalization and Cybercrime:** Online radicalization desensitizes and isolates individuals, often leading to cybercrime and online terrorism. The PROPHETS project investigates online behavioral processes leading to these actions.
- **Regional Differences in Radicalization:** In Western countries, radicalization often occurs among marginalized immigrant populations, while in the Western Balkans, it



occurs among native populations facing issues like unemployment, corruption, and dysfunctional governance.

1.3. Types of radicalization

As already mentioned in the text, some authors categorize radicalization into two types: **cognitive radicalization** and **violent radicalization**. Cognitive radicalization is defined as "a process through which a person accepts ideas that are significantly inconsistent with mainstream beliefs, rejects the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system" (Vidino and Brandon 2012:9). In contrast, violent radicalization occurs when "a person takes the additional step of using violence to promote ideas derived from cognitive radicalism" (Vidino and Brandon 2012:9). **While the definitions differ, they emphasize that radicalization is a gradual process rather than an instantaneous change.** This implies that if radicalization occurs over time, we can identify its signs before it reaches completion and intervene to halt the process. Furthermore, these definitions suggest a shift from accepting certain socially acceptable ideologies and methods to adopting ideologies and strategies that are viewed as socially unacceptable.

Findings based on 141 analyzed publications with quantitative findings illustrate the potential complexity of the inequality-radicalization relationship, **generally indicating that experiencing inequality is probably neither necessary nor sufficient for radicalization (nor terrorism).** However, it seems that **socio-political, moreover (perceived) socio-political inequality is probably positively related to (cognitive) radicalization.** Besides, review findings indicate that the potential effect of inequality could be different for different dimensions and types of inequality (economic or social-political, objective or subjective inequality, and even the concrete indicator of inequality) and different forms of radicalization (cognitive and behavioral) or terrorism. Additionally, our **findings indicate that the inequality-radicalization relationship could depend**

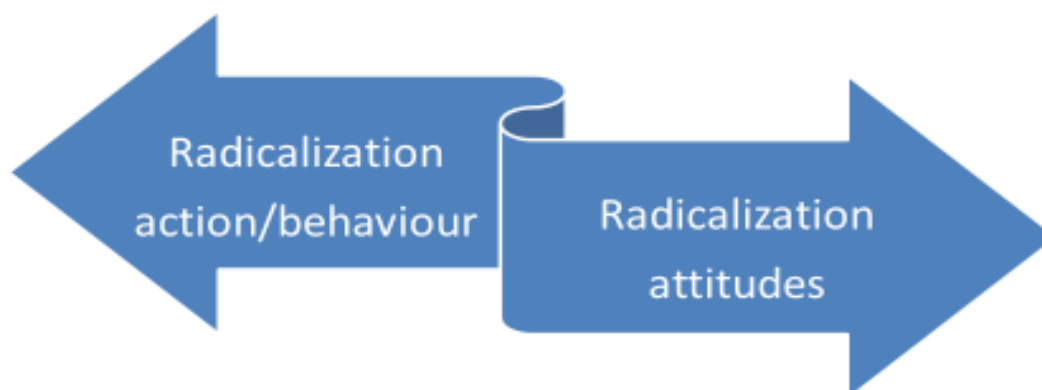


Съфинансирано от
Европейския съюз

on the context (socio-political, demographic, geographical) and whether we focus on the individual or social level (Franc, Pavlović, 2021).



TYPES OF RADICALIZATION



CSS Проект „Укрепване на капацитет, обмен на опит и изследователска дейност в сферата на сигурността“ е финансиран по Програмата на Република България по фонд „Вътрешна сигурност“ за периода 2021 – 2027 г.

Different studies offer different explanations and evidence for the radicalization process. For example, some have found that the most important factor in radicalization is interaction in small groups, close association with these groups and knowing someone associated with terrorist organizations. In other words, the main indicators of radicalization are **close connections within small groups, not poverty, lack of education or personal problems**. Sageman (2014) claims that the most important reason for radicalization is not psychological disorders, poverty, lack of



Съфинансирано от
Европейския съюз

education or personal problems, but emphasizes the importance of interaction in small, close-knit groups and close personal ties, and claims that his research has shown that people who have joined terrorist organizations even before joining already knew someone connected to terrorist organizations.



French sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar's research on Islamic radicalization in Europe has concluded that **the most vulnerable are young second- and third-generation migrants who are trying to build their own identity in a modern Western society** that proclaims individualism, independent decision-making, and the fluidity of identity. Young second and third-generation



migrants do not feel part of the community from which their parents come, nor are they fully integrated into Western European societies, where they may experience discrimination and marginalization. Discrimination, aggressive counterterrorism measures, and the marginalization of Muslims in Western societies help radical groups and terrorist organizations create a narrative of an evil, corrupt West that hates and humiliates Muslims, which helps these organizations recruit young people into their ranks. This narrative assists these organizations in recruiting young individuals to their ranks.

According to the Program on Extremism. (2023). Third generation extremism: Final report. George Washington University.

Retrieved from <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/third-generation-final.pdf> We are witnessing a new generation of radicalization that is distinct and more potent than previous ones. **In this third generation, organizations and ideologies matter less, while individuals play a crucial role, often creating their propaganda through manifestos and live broadcasts.** In early 2020, when Estonian police arrested a 14-year-old boy for leading an international terrorist organization, the Western counterterrorism community was left in shock. This incident highlighted a disturbing trend: the growing accessibility of extremist material online. The use of social media by terrorists and extremists has been on the rise and continues to increase.

The Estonian teenager was radicalized at a young age, engaging in encrypted chat rooms, connecting with like-minded peers across the globe, radicalizing others, and drawing inspiration from a diverse array of extremist ideologies. He exemplified the third generation of social media radicalization. But how does his story differ from those of his predecessors in the earlier two generations? What are the defining characteristics of each wave, and how do they manifest in real-world violence? The text opens with **important questions for everyone to consider. Can we conclude that the prevention of radicalization starts at home before extending to the societal level?** This issue deserves to be a key topic for a roundtable discussion that could yield practical implications. How can parental supervision and guidance of children's digital activities help prevent early radicalization? In what ways can open family communication about extremism and



online dangers reduce the risk of radicalization? **Do parents understand how platforms** like Telegram, 4chan, and Gab operate, and how crucial is it for them to be familiar with these digital spaces? What values and attitudes should parents foster in their children to help them recognize and reject extremist ideologies? How can parents identify early signs of radicalization in their children, such as behavioral changes, interest in extremist ideas, or withdrawal into anonymous online communities? How can families encourage critical thinking in children to help them discern fake news, conspiracy theories, and propaganda? How can we strike a balance between protecting a child's privacy and monitoring their online activities to prevent radicalization? Lastly, how can digital literacy education within the family help safeguard children from harmful and extremist online content?

Moreover, how can we prepare for the next developments in online extremism that might signal the emergence of yet another generational wave? Understanding these characteristics is crucial for preventing future terrorist attacks. While many scholars have explored online radicalization, few have analyzed the complex relationship between online activity and its offline consequences, extending beyond merely assessing whether online extremism leads to real-world violence.

According to the Program on Extremism (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated mass radicalization driven by conspiracy theories that lack factual support. **New platforms** like Telegram and Gab, which prioritize anonymity and encryption, enable radicalization to occur in secrecy.

The QAnon movement exemplifies this new wave of extremism, combining individual research with collective commitment. Rapid interactions on platforms such as 4chan and Telegram facilitate the spread of extreme views. Today's extremists are developing strategies to evade detection by law enforcement and other stakeholders concerned about online safety. For example, right-wing extremists often disguise violent rhetoric. A notable instance is the Poway attacker, who framed a call for violence as part of a video game, claiming, "It's easy to get into Minecraft and burn down a synagogue if you're smart enough."



Ironically, moderation and deplatforming measures can inadvertently promote radicalization. By filtering out more moderate voices, these actions leave extreme users in isolated digital spaces where they reinforce each other's radical beliefs and actions.

Moreover, **third-generation radicalization is frequently personalized**. Individuals become radicalized by following role models they refer to as "saints" within their movements. This has been evident in a series of chain attacks that occurred in Norway, New Zealand, the U.S., and Germany between 2011 and 2019. Some experts predict a "technological wave" of terrorism, where ideology will not be the primary driving force; instead, technology will enable anyone to contribute to the spread of extremism. **Social networks and online radicalization are becoming key catalysts, transforming the threat of terrorism on a global scale. This shift was anticipated as early as 1984 when a leader of the KKK discussed the potential of computers for recruiting extremists (Program on Extremism, 2023).**

The evolution of online radicalization can be understood through three generations, each reflecting technological advancements and changes in communication methods that have influenced extremist activities.

In the first generation, simple forums and websites allowed for the dissemination of propaganda and recruitment efforts. The second generation introduced large social networks and "echo chambers," which, fueled by algorithms, accelerated the radicalization process.

The third generation relies on encrypted applications and platforms specific to extremist groups, resulting in further decentralization of radicalization. This shift has diminished the role of organizations and ideologies, placing a greater emphasis on individual actors. As a result, there is now increased unpredictability, a quicker transition from radicalization to violence, and a more significant involvement of marginalized and vulnerable groups in the mass radicalization process.

Table 1: The Three Generations of Online Radicalization (Program on Extremism, 2023: 30).



	First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation
	1984 to mid-2000s	Mid-2000s to late-2010s	Late-2010s to today
Platforms	One-way forum sites and websites	First-generation; large social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram	First and second-generation; end-to-end encrypted apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram; and far-right specific apps like Gab and Parler
Impact on Radicalization	Extremist groups and networks spread propaganda more broadly and reach new recruits.	Extremists congregate in “echo chambers” which intensify radicalization, while algorithmic radicalization speeds up the process. Organizations are less important; more extremist ideologies turn to violence.	Ideology also grows less important, as “convergence” blends different traditions. Humour and memes contribute to the radicalization process and strengthen in-group bonds. Attackers more often share manifestos and cite online communities and predecessors. Women and children play a greater role as part of “mass radicalization,” as does mental health and a range of other “vulnerabilities.”
Impact on Terrorist Tactics and Targeting	Training and command-and-control are now possible through virtual formats.	Violence is increasingly defined by lone actors, with little training, attacking soft targets, and using more rudimentary weaponry.	Almost all violence is now committed by lone actors, employing even more diffuse terrorist targeting, often aimed at “accelerating”



			collapse. Shortened “flash-to-bang” timelines, often contributing to less effective attacks from less professional fighters. All contribute to a climate of unpredictability.
--	--	--	---

Some key points:

• **Complex Relationship Between Inequality and Radicalization:**

- Experiencing inequality alone is neither necessary nor sufficient for radicalization or terrorism.
- Socio-political and perceived socio-political inequality seems more closely tied to cognitive radicalization.
- Different types of inequality (economic, social-political, objective, subjective) affect radicalization differently.

• **Group Dynamics and Radicalization:**

- Close connections within small, close-knit groups are a stronger predictor of radicalization than poverty, lack of education, or personal problems.
- Many individuals joining terrorist organizations already had personal ties to someone involved.

• **Vulnerabilities of Migrant Communities:**

- Second- and third-generation migrants in Western Europe, facing identity struggles and discrimination, are particularly vulnerable.



- Aggressive counterterrorism measures and social marginalization often strengthen extremist narratives.

- **Third Generation of Online Radicalization:**

- In the late 2010s, online radicalization evolved toward individual actors creating their own propaganda through manifestos and live broadcasts.
- Encrypted apps like Telegram and far-right platforms like Gab facilitate radicalization in secrecy.
- The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated radicalization through conspiracy theories.

- **Decentralization and Increased Unpredictability:**

- Modern extremist movements are less ideologically driven and more individualized, making them harder to track and predict.
- Humor, memes, and online subcultures play a significant role in radicalization and in-group bonding.

- **Generational Waves of Online Radicalization:**

1. **First Generation (1984–mid-2000s):** Used forums and websites for propaganda and recruitment.
2. **Second Generation (mid-2000s–late-2010s):** Large social media platforms created “echo chambers,” accelerating radicalization.
3. **Third Generation (late-2010s–today):** Encrypted and far-right-specific apps decentralize radicalization, emphasizing individual actors over organized groups.

- **Impact on Terrorist Tactics:**

- Increasingly defined by lone actors with minimal training, targeting soft targets with rudimentary weapons.
- Shortened timelines from radicalization to violent action, contributing to less coordinated but more unpredictable attacks.



2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Different theories can be found in the literature to explain radicalization as a harmful social phenomenon that violates social values. The same theories are often used to try to explain the etiology of criminal acts. **Situational Action Theory** (Wikström, 2011) explains criminal behavior as a moral action that emphasizes the interaction between individuals and their environments. According to Wikström, crime is not simply a result of amorality; instead, it arises from different perceptions of good and evil, as well as an individual's ability to follow rules and exercise self-control. People tend to act in accordance with established rules because social order is based on shared norms. Crime occurs when an individual's moral rules conflict with legal norms. While moral rules dictate what is considered good or bad, the law is just one system of moral rules. Self-interest and rational choice alone cannot fully explain criminal behavior unless they also account for moral rules and context. Situational Action Theory highlights three fundamental elements: the individual, the situation, and the environment. If a person is predisposed to criminal behavior and finds themselves in a criminogenic environment, the likelihood of committing a crime increases. Additionally, crime does not occur if an individual does not perceive criminal behavior as a viable option. Deliberate choices are more likely in unfamiliar situations, whereas habitual actions develop through the repetition of specific behaviors in similar circumstances. **Self-control is essential for following personal moral rules, and the fear of consequences helps individuals adhere to the moral norms of their environment.** Differences in criminal behavior among individuals arise from variations in their morals, self-control abilities, and the influences of their surroundings. The environment can either promote or deter law-breaking, depending on the prevailing moral standards and available opportunities. Motivation for criminal behavior can stem from temptations, such as desires and opportunities, or from provocations, which are external pressures. Ultimately, individuals make choices based on their personal morals and the moral norms of their environment.



Съфинансирано от
Европейския съюз



Theoretical framework

- It is multidimensional approach
- **social-ecological theory** (Bouhana, 2019)
- **radical milieu** (Malthaner & Waldmann, 2014)
- **socio-spatial settings** (Lindekilde et al., 2019)
-

CRSS

Проект „Укрепване на капацитета, обмен на опит и изследователска дейност в сферата на сигурността“ с договор № 812108-68-02.10.2024, е финансиран от
финансовата линия на Програмата на Република България по фонд „Вътрешна сигурност“ за периода 2021 – 2027 г.

Bouhana’s Social-Ecological Theory of Radicalization offers a robust framework for understanding the multifaceted process of radicalization. By emphasizing the interaction between individual and environmental factors, the theory transcends reductionist approaches that focus solely on psychological or ideological explanations. Its emphasis on radicalizing settings and social dynamics provides actionable insights for preventing and countering violent extremism. As the global landscape of radicalization evolves, Bouhana’s work remains an essential foundation for interdisciplinary research and policy development.

The radical milieu provides certain opportunities for socialization, such as cognitive opportunities, moral opportunities, attachment opportunities, and opportunities for social control. In this way, the radical milieu provides certain opportunities for socialization through which the interaction between individuals and the environment promotes perceived opportunities for agency. Informal social control refers to certain types of influence that provide control through forms of direct supervision or monitoring or indirect interventions by contacting public institutions, such as the police or municipality, to influence the behaviour of another individual. For example, family, peers, neighbours, or observers may exercise informal social control. Social cohesion refers to various social characteristics that contribute to "connectedness" through the ability of a community to create moral and social integration and loyalty. Trust in the police and other services,



but institutionally residents may or may not trust the police. Perceptions or attitudes towards the police may be the result of past experiences (good and bad) with police enforcement, such as the police successfully investigating a home burglary, perceived discrimination and unfair treatment, existing neighbourhood problems and police presence, and negative experiences with the police in the country of origin.

Social ecology is relevant to analyzing the concentration of the problem of radicalization, focusing on the emergence and consolidation of radical milieus in some neighbourhoods and not in others.

Key points from Bouhana's Social-Ecological Theory of Radicalization:

- **Interaction of Individual and Environmental Factors:** The theory emphasizes how both individual characteristics and environmental contexts shape the process of radicalization, moving beyond purely psychological or ideological explanations.
- **Radicalizing Settings:** Certain environments, known as radical milieus, create opportunities for individuals to adopt extremist views and behaviors. These settings facilitate socialization processes that promote perceived opportunities for agency.
- **Types of Socialization Opportunities:**
 - **Cognitive Opportunities:** Exposure to radical beliefs and narratives.
 - **Moral Opportunities:** Justification of extremist behavior based on perceived moral obligations.
 - **Attachment Opportunities:** Formation of social bonds with radicalized individuals or groups.
 - **Opportunities for Social Control:** Mechanisms that regulate behavior through informal oversight or intervention.
- **Informal Social Control:** Influence exerted by family, peers, neighbors, or observers through direct supervision or reporting behaviors to public institutions like the police.
- **Social Cohesion:** The level of connectedness within a community, including shared moral values, social integration, and collective loyalty.



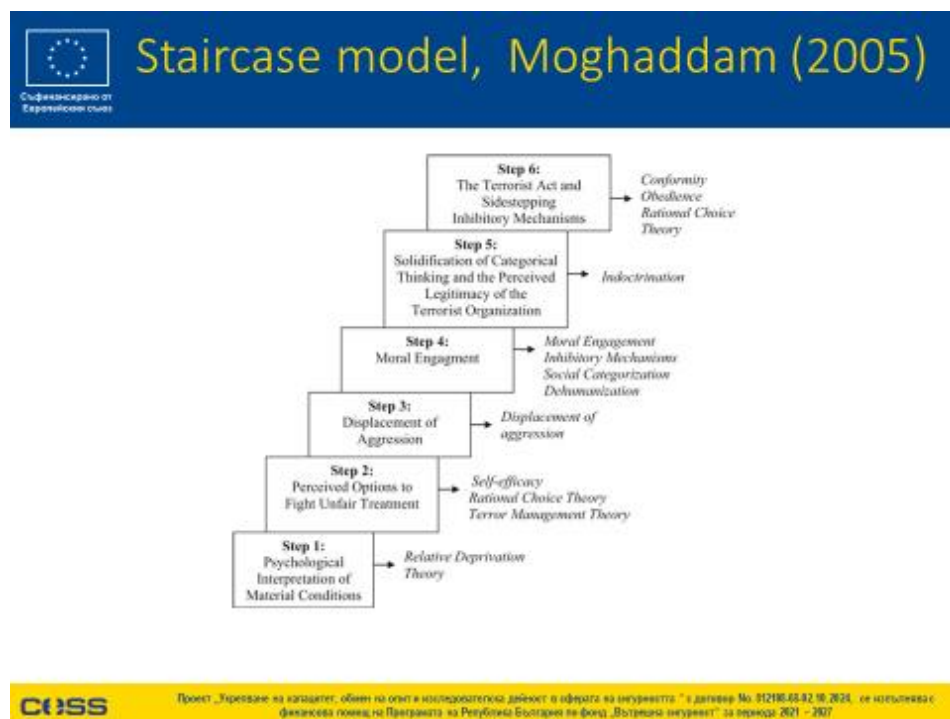
- **Trust in Institutions:** Attitudes toward police and public services, shaped by personal and community experiences with law enforcement, perceptions of fairness, and neighborhood conditions.
- **Geographical Concentration of Radicalization:** Radical milieus tend to emerge and consolidate in certain neighborhoods due to specific social and ecological factors, while remaining absent in others.



3. THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION

The process of radicalization, which can lead individuals to adopt extremist views and potentially commit acts of terrorism, is very complex. People who become radicalized come from a variety of ethnic, religious, national, and social backgrounds. While there are common factors that may contribute to certain extremist behaviors, these factors do not fully explain why someone chooses to engage in terrorism. To effectively prevent radicalization, it's essential to understand the underlying causes of this process.

Some researchers have creatively developed simulations based on existing knowledge to illustrate how radicalization occurs. These models provide valuable tools for researchers to better understand and study radicalization. They also identify areas where further research is needed and can serve as a foundation for creating strategies aimed at preventing radicalization (Pepys, Bowles, & Bouhana, 2020).





Fathali Moghaddam's staircase model. Moghaddam (2005:161) uses the metaphor of a narrow staircase consisting of a ground floor and five floors, with a terrorist act at the top, to describe the process of radicalization that can lead to terrorism. The author emphasizes that the most important factor in whether someone will stay on a particular floor or continue to climb the staircase is the person's perception, that is, how that person sees the situation and possible solutions to the problem, rather than the real state of affairs.

On the ground floor are millions of people who perceive injustice and feel relative deprivation, and only a fraction of them will climb to the next floor. On the first floor, people try to find solutions to improve their situation and eliminate injustice, and if they fail to find a way for individual mobility and perceive that they cannot influence decision-making in society, they climb.

The second floor is characterized by feelings of frustration and anger, and in that phase, individuals can be influenced by radical individuals who direct them to direct their anger towards their enemies, and those individuals who are more prone to physical violence climb further to the third floor.

People who reach the third floor begin to gradually accept the ideology of terrorist organizations, which justifies terrorism, and those who fully accept the vision of the world of terrorist organizations climb further to the fourth floor, where recruitment into terrorist organizations takes place and, from the psychological side, the categorization of the world into "us versus them" takes place. Finally, on the fifth, and last floor, individuals are trained to suppress the mechanisms that prevent them from harming others and carrying out terrorist attacks (Moghaddam 2005:162). Moghaddam (2005) claims that the methods most often applied in the fight against terrorism and radicalization, such as repressive measures, strengthening military power or new technologies, will not eliminate terrorism and radicalization in the long term, and that is why governments should focus on prevention. If we do not eliminate the conditions that keep millions of people on the "ground floor" (according to Moghaddam's model), we still have a pool from which a new terrorist can emerge every time we remove one terrorist from the top of the ladder (Moghaddam 2005).

The exercise aims to raise awareness among police officers about how difficult it is to communicate and act towards people with significantly different beliefs and value systems than their own. The



aim is also to provide basic communication tools that can be used in such cases, adapted to the two categories of perpetrators. During the exercise, we then monitored police officers who acted towards these types of perpetrators without tools and those officers who used specific communication skills/tools. Other participants will be able to monitor their performance, precisely the difference in their act as well as the outcome of the communication process.

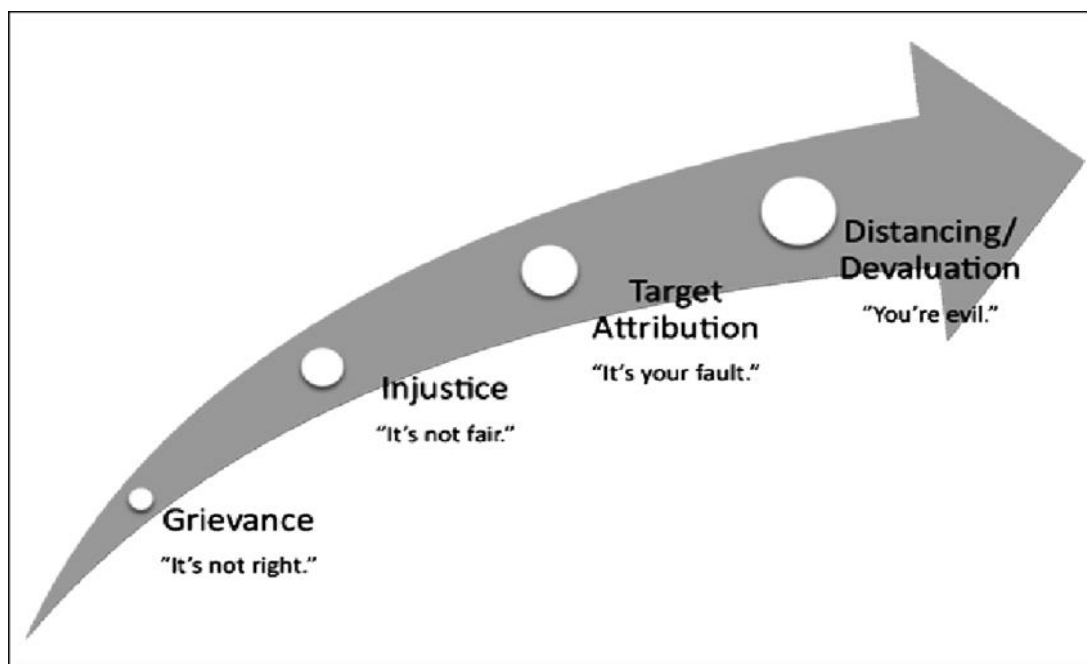
Researchers in the fields of social sciences and interdisciplinary studies, especially those focused on security and criminal behavior, have been exploring the reasons behind radicalization since the destruction of skyscrapers in America. In this work, I will present various concepts related to the process of radicalization. While different authors provide unique perspectives, they all identify common elements within this phenomenon.

The concepts analyze various violent extremist groups and with differing ideologies to identify common factors in their radicalization processes.

Borum (2003) proposed a four-stage conceptual model to explain the emergence of a "terrorist mindset." This model addresses how grievances and vulnerabilities can lead to hatred towards a specific group and how that hatred may escalate into violence.

The four-stage process begins with the framing of an unsatisfactory event, condition, or complaint as unjust ("It's not right" becomes "It's not fair"). Next, the perceived injustice is attributed to a specific policy, person, or nation ("You're to blame"). The responsible party is then defamed, often depicted as evil ("You're evil"), which helps justify or encourage aggressive behavior. It's important to note that this model was originally developed for police training purposes, rather than as a formal social science theory.

Figure 1. Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset (Borum, 2011:39)





4. PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

Some authors (Della Porta, D., & LaFree, 2012) discuss two dimensions of radicalization: **behavior and actions, and attitudes and perceptions**. These dimensions do not necessarily align with one another. For example, a person who holds radical beliefs may not engage in violent actions, and someone who joins a violent group may not actively participate in acts of violence. In other words, involvement in violent groups and participation in violence do not always indicate a commitment to radical goals; motivations can include personal relationships and loyalty to the group. Behavioral radicalization refers to the process by which individuals move from holding extremist beliefs to engaging in violent actions in pursuit of these ideological goals. This process encompasses actual participation in activities such as terrorism, violent protests, or other forms of political violence. It emphasizes behaviors that arise from adopting radical ideologies, distinguishing it from merely holding extremist views without acting on them. Understanding behavioral radicalization is crucial because it marks the point where radical beliefs translate into concrete, often harmful, actions.

To mitigate the risk of radicalization, it is essential to address the root causes of social inequality, promote social cohesion, and foster inclusive communities. **Building resilience within individuals and communities is essential to counter its pull. Efforts to do so often involve:**

1. **Education:** Promoting critical thinking and media literacy to help individuals recognize and resist manipulative narratives.
2. **Dialogue:** Encouraging conversations across ideological divides to foster empathy and mutual understanding.
3. **Community Building:** Strengthening local networks that provide support and belonging, reducing the appeal of extremist groups.
4. **Policy Interventions:** Governments and organizations must address systemic grievances that fuel radicalization, such as inequality and exclusion



4.1. Using communication to observe and prevent deviations

The public often perceives police officers and the police system as primarily repressive. When citizens see a police officer, particularly in many countries, their first impression is shaped by the visible tools of force, such as firearms and police batons, which are governed by various laws and regulations. This perception of the police, often misguided, is influenced by several factors, with the police's authority to use force being particularly significant. Media reports featuring instances of police overreach, especially in the USA, heavily impact public opinion and have led to widespread protests and movements. Unfortunately, most people only get their information about the police from media coverage, unless they have personally experienced a situation involving the police as either a victim or a perpetrator. The types of police work that the public most frequently encounters—traffic enforcement and basic policing—often overshadow the many other roles and duties that police officers perform. The police system is also highly insular and is influenced by police subculture, which limits public access to the realities of police work and the experiences of officers. Police culture encompasses the attitudes, values, and norms that officers share as they navigate the challenges of their profession (Paoline and Terill, 2014). Although police organizations differ across cultures and countries, certain elements of police subculture are consistent. Researchers Kampanakis (2000) and Paoline (2003) identify key aspects such as constant suspicion, conservatism, prejudice, machismo, a code of silence, solidarity, and cohesion. In addition to being legally restricted in sharing information outside their ranks, the prevailing culture within law enforcement often fosters a sense of suspicion and isolation from the broader community. As a result, the public remains largely unaware of what police officers experience in their day-to-day operations and organizational contexts. Given these factors, it is unsurprising that public perception of the police tends to be negative. In police work, the use of force is often legally justified because officers encounter dangerous offenders who have committed or are threatening to commit serious crimes. However, what often surprises the public is how useful and effective communication techniques and skills can be in law enforcement. Many authors emphasize the significance of communication skills in police work (Todak & James, 2018; Sun, 2003). The



effectiveness of communication within the police has been established for decades, particularly through crisis negotiation.

Crisis negotiation originated in the 1970s in the United States, specifically in New York, as a response to the authorities' dissatisfaction with the high number of casualties—among police officers, perpetrators, and victims—during police actions and crisis interventions. It quickly proved to be an extremely effective tool for peacefully resolving crisis situations, meaning without the use of force. Today, it is recognized as one of the most effective methods for handling all types of crisis situations (Grubb et al., 2020). The objectives of crisis negotiation are varied: it not only aims to achieve a peaceful resolution but also to reduce further harm. Engaging negotiators can minimize or eliminate injuries and casualties among other police units involved in resolving the crisis, such as tactical teams and special police units. If the intervention commander decides that the use of force is necessary to resolve the crisis, the negotiator's role becomes crucial, for example, by buying time for tactical units and ensuring safe conditions for them when they need to enter the targeted premises. It is important to note that communication skills are just one aspect of a crisis negotiator's toolkit. Negotiators are typically police officers, often from special units, who must consider all security and tactical elements throughout the complex negotiation process. They must be highly adaptable and prepared for a variety of unexpected stimuli and changes in both communication strategies and tactical approaches.

Active listening is a crucial communication skill in negotiations, particularly within police work. It involves fully focusing on what the other person is saying without judgment, while using both verbal and non-verbal cues to show that they are being heard. Common active listening techniques used in crisis negotiations include paraphrasing, mirroring, labeling emotions, using pauses or silence effectively, employing "I" messages, asking open-ended questions, and offering minimal encouragements (Miller, 2005). The goal of active listening is to calm the individual involved, promote conversation, gather information, build rapport, and influence the person's behavior. It's important to highlight that the effectiveness of communication skills, including active listening, does not solely depend on a person's education, training, or experience. The personal characteristics



of the police officer using these skills also play a significant role. Initially, it was thought that any trained officer could serve as a negotiator, but research from the 1980s revealed this to be incorrect. Studies indicated that successful crisis negotiators must possess certain traits, such as a specific personality structure, a balanced decision-making style that combines rationality and intuition, emotional regulation, mental toughness, resilience, effective stress coping mechanisms, high emotional intelligence, authenticity, teamwork skills, and adaptability. These attributes are essential because crisis negotiations require a calm, natural, and genuine approach, which can be challenging to achieve in fast-paced, uncertain, and potentially dangerous situations. Therefore, negotiators must maintain a high level of self-control, emotional regulation, and mental resilience to engage in a natural conversation with the individual involved. Additionally, it's crucial to recognize that using active listening techniques in a police context can be risky if applied in a forced, unskilled, or unnatural way, as this may provoke an undesirable reaction from the individual.

Effective communication is essential in crisis situations and serves as a preventive tool in various aspects of policing. For instance, when police officers engage with the community, particularly through the community policing model, they can build trust and create a sense of security among citizens. This interaction allows officers to gather valuable information that can help prevent criminal acts.

This approach is particularly relevant in the context of radicalization and related criminal activities. Recent trends indicate that attacks carried out by radicalized individuals acting independently are becoming more frequent than those organized by groups. Beat officers and community policing officers who are trained in communication skills play a crucial role in addressing the threat posed by these so-called "lone wolves." By becoming familiar with the local community, police can identify and monitor individuals who may have displayed signs of radicalization.

During their basic training, police officers learn fundamental skills for gathering information, especially from citizens. However, establishing a sense of trust is vital to collecting meaningful



information. When citizens feel safe and trust their police officers, they are more likely to share important details that can aid in crime prevention.

While it may be more challenging for police to gather information about organized radicalized groups due to their clandestine nature, officers who are well-integrated into the community can still obtain valuable insights from residents using their communication skills, thereby enhancing crime prevention efforts.

Some key points on communication in policing and crisis prevention:

1. Public Perception of Police:

- Police are often seen as repressive due to their visible tools of force (firearms, batons) and media portrayal.
- Public opinion is heavily shaped by media reports on police overreach, with limited direct experience.
- Traffic enforcement and basic policing overshadow the broader roles of police officers.
- Police culture, including suspicion, conservatism, prejudice, and a code of silence, contributes to public misunderstanding.

2. Importance of Communication in Policing:

- Effective communication is crucial for observing and preventing deviations and reducing the need for force.
- Crisis negotiation, developed in the 1970s in New York, demonstrated the effectiveness of peaceful resolutions in dangerous situations.
- Communication helps minimize casualties and injuries in crisis situations and supports tactical operations when force is required.

3. Crisis Negotiation Skills:



- Crisis negotiators require adaptability, emotional regulation, mental toughness, and high emotional intelligence.
- Active listening is a key skill, involving techniques like paraphrasing, mirroring, labeling emotions, and asking open-ended questions.
- The success of active listening depends on both training and the personal characteristics of the officer.

4. Communication as a Preventive Tool:

- Community policing fosters trust and security, enabling officers to gather valuable information for crime prevention.
- Officers trained in communication can identify signs of radicalization and monitor potential threats.
- Building trust with the community is essential for effective information gathering and preventing criminal acts.



5. CONCLUSION

Borum (2011) highlights **seven critical elements that social science researchers and practitioners need to understand regarding violent radicalization:**

1. How do individuals become engaged in violent extremist ideologies and the activities that support terrorism? In particular, what role do social relationships (both in-person and virtual) and bonds play in facilitating belief and involvement?
2. What is the relative contribution of various "push" factors (grievances and adverse sociopolitical conditions) and "pull" factors (lures, or perceived rewards for aligning with a group) for individuals? How are these "push" and "pull" factors conveyed through propaganda or narrative themes to resonate most strongly with individuals who become involved with violent extremism?
3. How and why does the nature of an individual's involvement and engagement with homegrown violent extremism change—or remain the same—over time?
4. Why do most people with militant extremist beliefs not engage in violent action?
5. How do violent extremists, especially those in Western democracies, select their targets and plan and prepare for attacks? This includes patterns of communication, training, and operational tradecraft.
6. What key life factors, including past criminal activity, incarceration, and psychosocial vulnerabilities (if any), seem to be associated with an individual's entry into and engagement with violent extremism?
7. How can we measure progress in deterring radicalization into violent extremism and assess the success or effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, including an understanding of what works for whom?

The same author emphasizes that a key implication of these unresolved questions is that effectively addressing violent extremism demands more than just "countering the narrative." The "war on terror" has transformed into a critical "battle of ideas." **Borum emphasizes that preventing radicalization and combating violent extremism involves more than just opposing extremist**



propaganda or narratives. He argues that the issue runs much deeper and requires a meaningful engagement with the ideas, values, and beliefs that drive radicalization. The term "battle of ideas" indicates the importance of presenting alternative, positive ideas that can resonate with individuals and help them resist extremist beliefs. Simply denying or suppressing extremist rhetoric is insufficient - it is crucial to understand why these ideas attract people and to provide better, more meaningful responses to their needs and frustrations.

This is particularly significant in the context of youth prevention, where families play a critical role in shaping values and fostering critical thinking, which can help diminish the appeal of radical ideologies.

In preventing and identifying radicalized individuals, it is crucial for police officers to understand the push, pull, and individual factors that contribute to radicalization. According to Borum (2011), grasping how individuals become involved in violent extremist ideologies and the processes that lead to their involvement is essential.

Push factors refer to socio-political pressures, frustrations, injustices, and marginalization that may drive a person toward radicalization. For instance, a young person who feels socially excluded due to discrimination or perceived injustice may be more likely to connect with extremist groups. Officers should recognize these signs through outreach and community engagement, identifying individuals who express strong dissatisfaction or a sense of not belonging.

Pull factors encompass the appeal that extremist groups offer, which may include a sense of purpose, belonging, status, or material gain. For example, someone might be drawn to charismatic leaders or feel a sense of power and influence within these groups. Police officers should monitor propaganda and narratives that glorify violence and analyze how such messages are spread within local and virtual communities.

Individual factors include personal characteristics such as psychosocial vulnerability, previous criminal activity, trauma, or a strong need to belong. For instance, a person with a history of violent



behavior or psychological issues may be more susceptible to radicalization. Police officers should collaborate closely with psychologists, social workers, teachers, schools, sports clubs, and other organizations to identify individuals who show signs of radicalization.

In line with Borum's recommendations, police officers could:

- Develop trust within communities to encourage dialogue and gain insight into local issues.
- Enhance their ability to recognize early signs of radicalization through education and training. Collaborate with various institutions (schools, health services, religious communities) to ensure a multidisciplinary approach.
- Monitor online activities that promote extremism and analyze how radical propaganda spreads.
- Provide support for deradicalization and resocialization programs to reduce the risk of reverting to violent ideologies.
- This comprehensive approach enables the timely identification of risks, prevention of radicalization, and effective intervention, significantly contributing to the security and stability of society.

Building resilience to radicalization is a critical element in many violent extremism prevention policies. However, ongoing debates about the definitions of radicalization and resilience hinder effective implementation. A growing body of literature emphasizes that differing interpretations of these concepts impact real-world practices and cross-sector collaboration among frontline workers. The academic literature on resistance to radicalization is limited and primarily categorized into three groups: studies applying resilience to prevention efforts, critiques of resilience in this context, and mappings of resilience discourse.

Research on resilience to radicalization highlights various perspectives that define what it means to be resilient and how such resilience is developed. The first perspective emphasizes the importance of freedom of expression and the exploration of diverse ideas and values. According to this view, resilience arises within a stable and tolerant environment that encourages diversity and allows for open dialogue. Access to different viewpoints and safe spaces for discussion are crucial



in preventing radicalization. The idea of having people to confide in is particularly significant, as **suppressing differing opinions can increase the likelihood of extremism**. This perspective also stresses the importance of teaching empathy and tolerance while maintaining one's own values. The second perspective defines resilience as the **ability to think critically** and take action against injustice. In this context, resilience is demonstrated through **active participation in social debates and decision-making processes, as well as a readiness to confront prejudice and injustice**. Critical thinking is viewed as the foundation of resilience, and mere conformity to social norms does not necessarily indicate resilience. This perspective also highlights the need to question authority and established beliefs, including religious doctrines. While stable social ties are deemed important, isolated and closed communities can hinder the development of resilience. Additionally, academic success and high intelligence are not seen as essential indicators of resilience. The third perspective focuses on **flexibility and the ability to adapt to social norms**. Here, resilience involves understanding and accepting the values of one's environment, even when there is some disagreement. Flexibility is regarded as a vital strength, and, while stable social networks and diverse friendships remain important, they are not prioritized over adaptability. This perspective emphasizes critical thinking and the courage to confront prejudice, even when it poses personal risks. Academic success, good behavior in school, and access to employment are also not considered prerequisites for developing resilience. The fourth perspective highlights **inner strength and close social ties as crucial for resisting radicalization**. From this viewpoint, resilient individuals possess strong self-esteem and perseverance in their values, although they may not necessarily be critical thinkers or activists. Good behavior and respect for the law are viewed as fundamental indicators of resilience, while social connections and a stable environment are considered more important than exposure to diverse ideas. Strong friendships and tight-knit communities are particularly valued for their role in enhancing resilience (Stephens & Sieckelinck, 2021). **In other words, a stable and supportive social environment has a greater preventive effect than simply encountering different opinions. Individuals who feel connected and secure are less likely to be radicalized, even when exposed to extremist ideas.**



It could be said that local police can play a key role in preventing radicalization and enhancing community resilience through a collaborative approach/model known as **Community Policing**. This model is founded on strong cooperation between the police and the local community, with the aim of building trust, fostering social cohesion, and identifying early signs of radicalization. The first step in this process is establishing open communication and trust. The police can organize regular meetings and forums where citizens are encouraged to discuss important and controversial topics. This creates safe spaces where diverse opinions can be expressed without fear of stigma or condemnation. Supporting critical thinking and encouraging active citizen participation are also vital components of this model. The police could encourage or collaborate with schools, non-governmental organizations, and other associations to develop educational programs that promote empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking skills. By engaging in activities like these, the police are investing in proactive prevention strategies for early detection and prevention of radicalization. By hosting workshops and public debates on civic engagement and combating prejudice, the police can help strengthen the resilience of both youth and adults against extremist influences.

Additionally, fostering social connections and a sense of belonging is essential in preventing radicalization. Partnership programs between the community and various institutions can enhance social cohesion and reduce the isolation that may lead to radicalization. Recognizing the early signs of radicalization requires proper education and training for police officers. Specialized training enables officers to identify changes in behavior and attitudes that might indicate a process of radicalization. Furthermore, police officers can serve as mentors in preventive programs, providing young people with positive role models and support. A flexible approach tailored to the specific needs of the local community is vital for the successful implementation of the Community Policing model. Understanding the cultural, social, and economic contexts in which the community operates allows the police to adapt their preventive measures and strategies effectively.



Collaborating with local leaders, religious representatives, and civil society organizations further enhances community resilience and ensures the sustainability of prevention initiatives.

Through the collaborative Community Policing model, local police can serve as a bridge between citizens and institutions, fostering a safe and inclusive social environment that promotes openness, critical thinking, and solidarity.

By strengthening community resilience, the risk of radicalization is significantly reduced, contributing to the creation of a stable and just society.

It is essential to adopt a realistic approach to problem-oriented policing, noting that both citizens and law enforcement must be aware of global issues that can impact their local communities. Instead of focusing narrowly on isolated incidents, it is crucial to examine the underlying causes of these problems and develop realistic solutions grounded in experience and supported by repeatable research relevant to their environment.

The study conducted by Stephens & Sieckelinck (2021) highlights the concerns of one **respondent, who felt he was discouraged from expressing his views. This feeling, in turn, drove him towards extremism. Therefore, it is vital to utilize communication strategies and collaborate with the community to reach potential radicals. By doing so, we can encourage them to contribute positively to the community, helping them avoid a shift towards negative, extreme radicalism.**

People typically call the police when they are in trouble. However, a proactive approach involves fostering confidence between citizens and their local police, encouraging individuals to report any suspicious or threatening behavior in their neighborhoods. This is why implementing a Community Policing strategy is essential. Rather than waiting for a crime to occur, this approach focuses on investigating the root causes of problems and taking preventive measures against potential consequences.

**Some key points:**

Radicalization and resistance to it are crucial to preventing violent extremism, yet varied definitions complicate their application. Research on resistance focuses on its role in prevention, critiques, and discourse mapping.

Resilience Perspectives:

- Emphasizes freedom of expression and a tolerant environment for dialogue.
- Defines resilience as critical thinking and active engagement against injustice.
- Focuses on flexibility and adapting to norms while encouraging critical thought.
- Highlights inner strength, social ties, respect for law, and good behavior.

Role of Local Police:

Local police can prevent radicalization through community policing, fostering trust, promoting social cohesion, and identifying early signs of radicalization. Collaboration with schools and organizations is essential.

Proactive Approach:

Engaging local leaders and adapting strategies to community needs strengthens resilience. Police must recognize early radicalization signs and serve as mentors.

Problem-Oriented Actions:

Effective prevention involves understanding global issues impacting communities and developing targeted solutions through communication and community involvement.

In summary, a combination of proactive policing, education, and shared responsibility is vital for preventing radicalization and fostering resilient communities.



REFERENCES

- Azinović, V. (2017) The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon And Radicalization In The Western Balkans: Understanding The Context, 2012-2016. U Azinović, V. (ur.) Between salvation and terror: radicalization and the foreign fighter phenomenon in the Western Balkans. Sarajevo: The Atlantic Initiative.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). Liquid Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beelmann, A. (2020). A Social-Developmental Model of Radicalization: A Systematic Integration of Existing Theories and Empirical Research. International Journal of Conflict and Violence, 14, 1-14.
- Borum, R. (2003). Understanding the terrorist mindset. FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, 72(7), 7-10.
- Borum, R. (2011). Radicalization into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research. Journal of Strategic Security, 4(4), 37–62. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2>
- Bouhana N. (2019). The moral ecology of extremism: A systemic perspective. UK Commission for Countering Terrorism.
- Castells, M. (1996). The rise of the network society. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Change Institute for the European Commission (Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security). (2008, February). Studies into violent radicalisation; Lot 2: The beliefs, ideologies and narratives.
- Della Porta, D., & LaFree, G. (2012). Guest Editorial: Processes of Radicalization and De-Radicalization. International Journal of Conflict and Violence, 6(1), 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-2926>
- Franc, R. & Pavlović, T. (2021): Inequality and Radicalisation- Systematic Review of Quantitative Studies, Terrorism and Political Violence, DOI:10.1080/09546553.2021.1974845



Grubb, A., Brown, S., Hall, P., Bowen, E. (2020). From Deployment to Debriefing: Introducing the D.I.A.M.O.N.D. Model of Hostage and Crisis Negotiation. *Police Practice and Research*, 22, 3, 1 – 52.

Kampanakis, J. (2000). Police organizational culture and policemen's integrity In Milan Pagon, *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: ethics, integrity, and human rights*. Ljubljana: College of Police and Security Studies. pp. 497--506

Khosrokhavar, F. (2013). Radicalization in Prison: The French Case. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 14(2), 284–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2013.792654>

KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2017). *Radikalizacija*. Zagreb: TIM press

Lösel, F., & Farrington, D. P. (2012). Direct protective and buffering protective factors in the development of youth violence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(2), S8–S23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2012.04.029>

Marone, F. (2016). Italian jihadists in Syria and Iraq. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.1205>

McCauley, C., & Moskalenko, S. (2008). Mechanisms of political radicalization: Pathways toward terrorism. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20(3), 415–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550802073367>

Miller, L. (2005). Hostage negotiation: Psychological principles and practices. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 7(4), 277-298.

Mindell, A. (1995). *Sitting in the fire: large group transformation using conflict and diversity*. Portland, OR: Deep Democracy Exchange.

Moghaddam, F. M. (2005) The staircase to terrorism: A psychological exploration. *American psychologist*, 60 (2):161 - 169.



- Paoline, A. E., Terrill, W. (2014). *Police Culture: Adapting to the Strains of the Job*. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press
- Paoline, E. (2003). Taking Stock: Toward a Richer Understanding of Police Culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 31. 199-214.
- Pepys, R., Bowles, R., & Bouhana, N. (2020). A simulation model of the radicalisation process based on the IVEE theoretical framework. *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation*, 23(4). <https://doi.org/10.18564/jasss.4345>
- Program on Extremism. (2023). Third generation extremism: Final report. George Washington University. Available from <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/third-generation-final.pdf>
- Rossi, F. (2020). The Multifactorial Process of Radicalisation to ‘Jihadi’ Fundamentalism, in *Criminal Justice Network*, 1-18 <https://www.criminaljusticenetwork.eu/en/post/the-multifactorial-process-of-radicalisation-to-jihadi-fundamentalism>
- Sageman, M. (2004). *Understanding Terror Networks*. University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812206791>
- Sageman, M. (2014). “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 4:565–580.
- Sayce, L. (2001). Social inclusion and mental health. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 25, 121–123. doi: 10.1192/pb.25.4.121.
- Schmid, A. P. (2013) Radicalization, de-radicalization, counter-radicalization: a conceptual discussion and literature review. *ICCT Research Paper*, 97 (1):1 – 91.
- Security Technologies and Social Implications / Markarian, Garik; Karlović, Ruža; Nitsch, Holger et al. (ur.). Hoboken (NJ): John Wiley & Sons, 2023



- Shafieioun, D., & Haq, H. (2023). Radicalization from a societal perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1197282. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1197282>
- Stephens, W., & Sieckelinck, S. (2021). Resiliences to radicalisation: Four key perspectives. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 66, 100486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2021.100486>
- Sun, I. Y. (2003). A comparison of police field training officers' and non-training officers' conflict resolution styles: controlling versus supportive strategies. *Police Quarterly*, 6, 22–50.
- Taylor, M., & Horgan, J. (2006). A conceptual framework for addressing psychological process in the development of the terrorist. *Terrorism and political violence*, 18(4), 585-601.
- Todak, N., James, L. (2018). A systematic social observation study of police de-escalation tactics. *Police Quarterly*, 21, 509–543.
- Vidino, L. i J. Brandon. (2012) *Countering Radicalization in Europe*. London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR).
- WIKSTRÖM, P.O. (2011). 'Does everything matter? Addressing problems of causation and explanation in the study of crime.' In J. M. McGloin, C. J. Sullivan, L. W. Kennedy (Eds.), *When Crime Appears: The Role of Emergence*, pp. 53–72. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203802106
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2005. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Този обучителен материал е създаден в рамките на проект „Укрепване на капацитет, обмен на опит и изследователска дейност в сферата на сигурността“, с номер BG65ISPR001-3.004-0002, по договор № 812108-68-02.10.2024, финансиран по Програмата на Република България по фонд „Вътрешна сигурност“ за периода 2021 – 2027 г. Цялата отговорност за съдържанието на материала е на неговия автор и фондация „Европейски институт“ и при никакви обстоятелства не може да се приема, че този документ отразява официалното становище на ЕС и Отговорния управляващ орган.